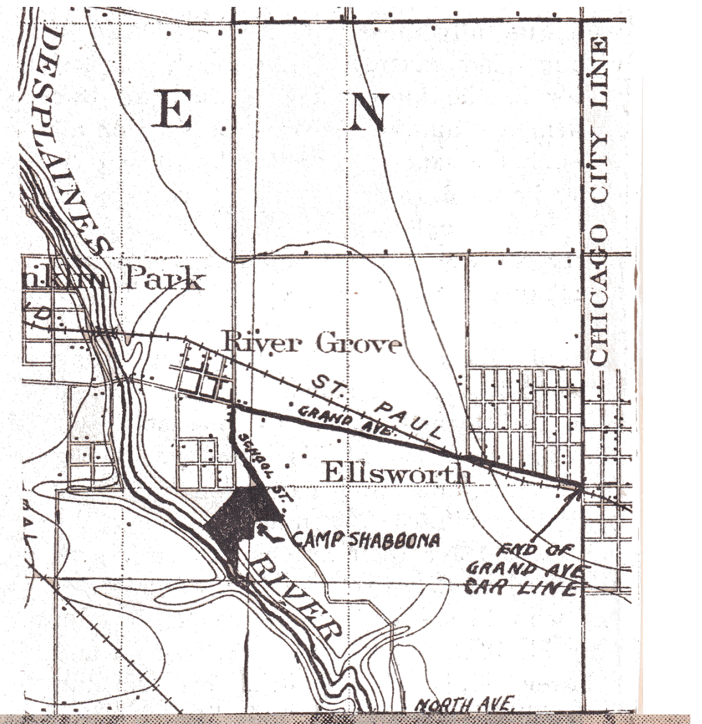
Prelude to a Camp

The West Side District

In the early years, the camp a Scout attended depended entirely on the geographical district in which they lived. Camp Shabbona, located along the Des Plaines River, served Scouts from the West Side District for a decade.



Top: Bunk House built by Troop 316

Right: 'Shabbona Lodge'

Top Right: Map showing the location of Shabbona

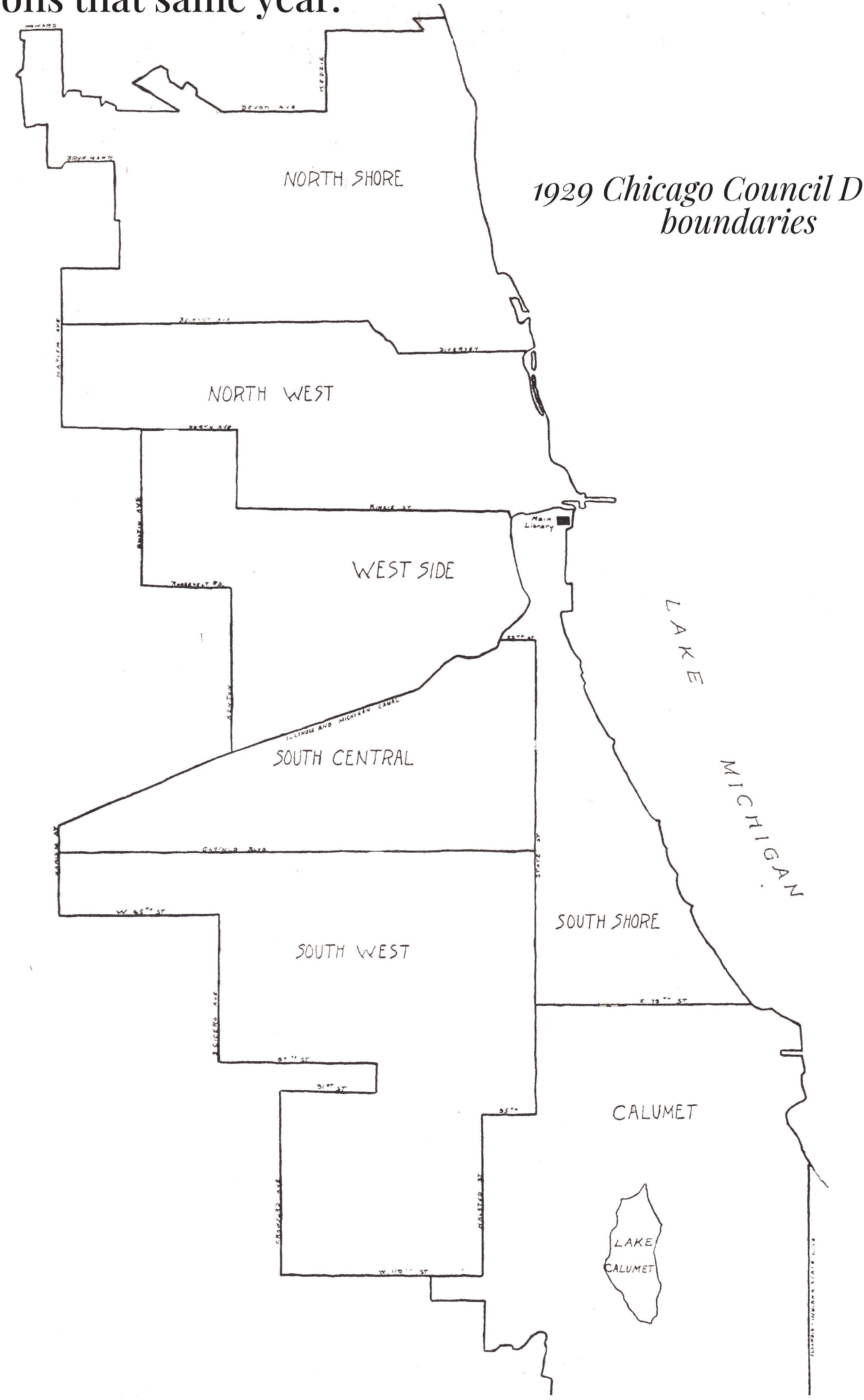
The Story of Shabbona as told by the Chicago Council 1917:

> Shabbona was a nephew of the great Chief Tecumseh, with whom Shabbona fought at the battle of the Thames, where Tecumseh, the noted chief of the Pottawatomies, was probably shot by Private Johnson, of the Kentucky militia, who afterwards became Vice-President of the United States. After the death of Tecumseh, Shabbona became head chief of the Pottawatomies, Ottawas and Chippewas and had the Sacs and Foxes. At this time Shabbona, according to his own words, became satisfied that the white man was fully the equal of the red man in courage and strength, and greatly his superior in the knowledge of war and war implements, and being sorely pressed on all sides, his escape appearing almost impossible, he made a vow to the Great Spirit that if he would lead him to a path of safety he would never again take up the tomahawk against the pale-faces. Therefore, during the Black Hawk War Shabbona refused Black Hawk his help, but being Satisfied that Black Hawk's warriors would soon be turned loose to massacre the whites, he sacrificed his standing among the Indians and put his own life in danger by riding almost 200 miles, warning the whites to leave their homes and rush with all speed to the fort at Chicago for safety. All who heeded him were saved, but on May 21, 1832, the sixteen men, women and children who did not heed his warning were killed and scalped.

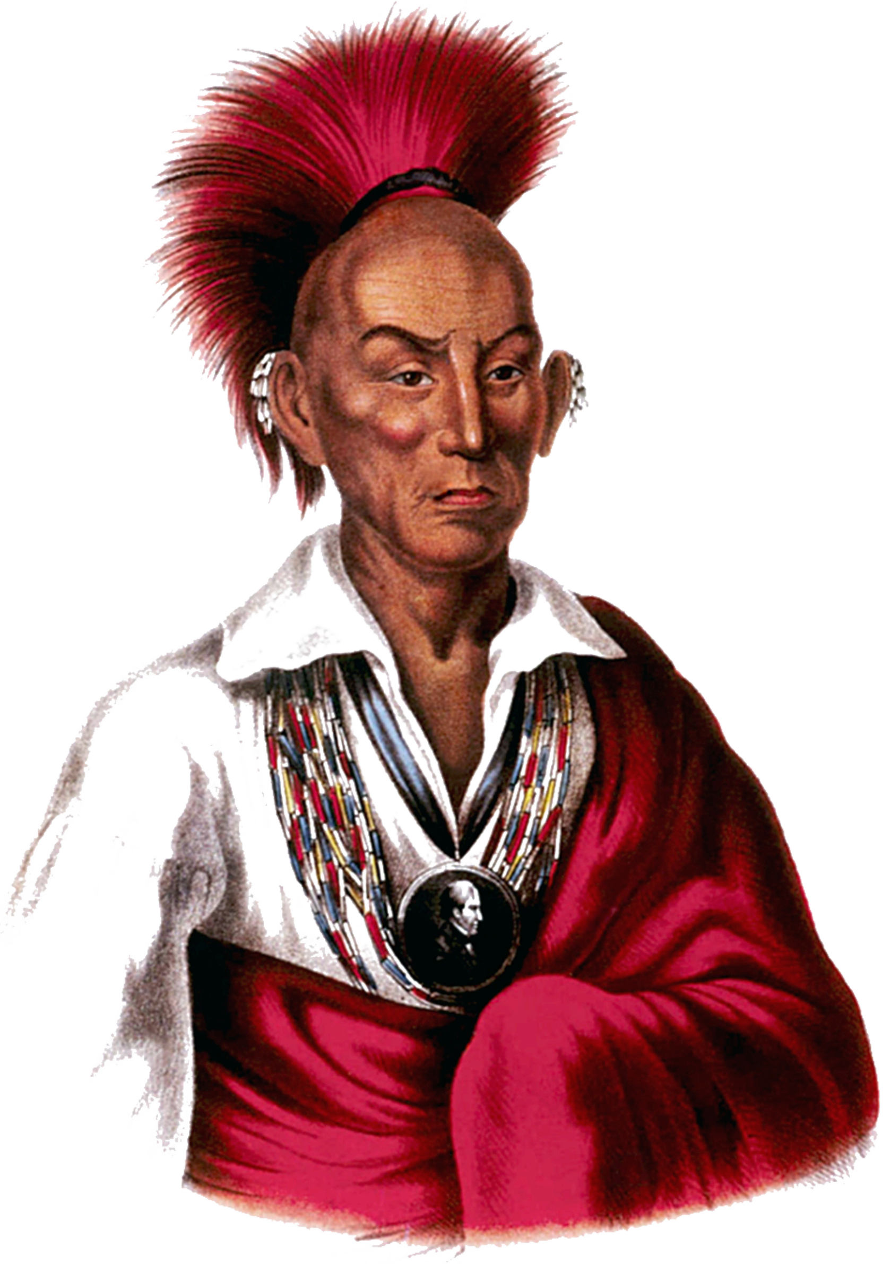
Consolidation of the District Camps

Beginning in 1921, the Chicago Council made a concerted effort to consolidate the district camps into one central location: the main Council camp, Owasippe. This initiative started with the creation of sub-camps, namely Camps Beard, McDonald, and West, located on Crystal Lake. These sub-camps remained exclusive to the districts that operated them, and during this period, each camp was directed by its respective District Executive.

In March 1925, the Chicago Council purchased 280 acres on Big Blue Lake from the Fruitvale Resort Company for $35,000. It was decided that the West Side District Camp would be relocated to this site, and Camp Shabbona ceased operations that same year.



1929 Chicago Council District boundaries



Black Hawk

(Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak), 1767–1838

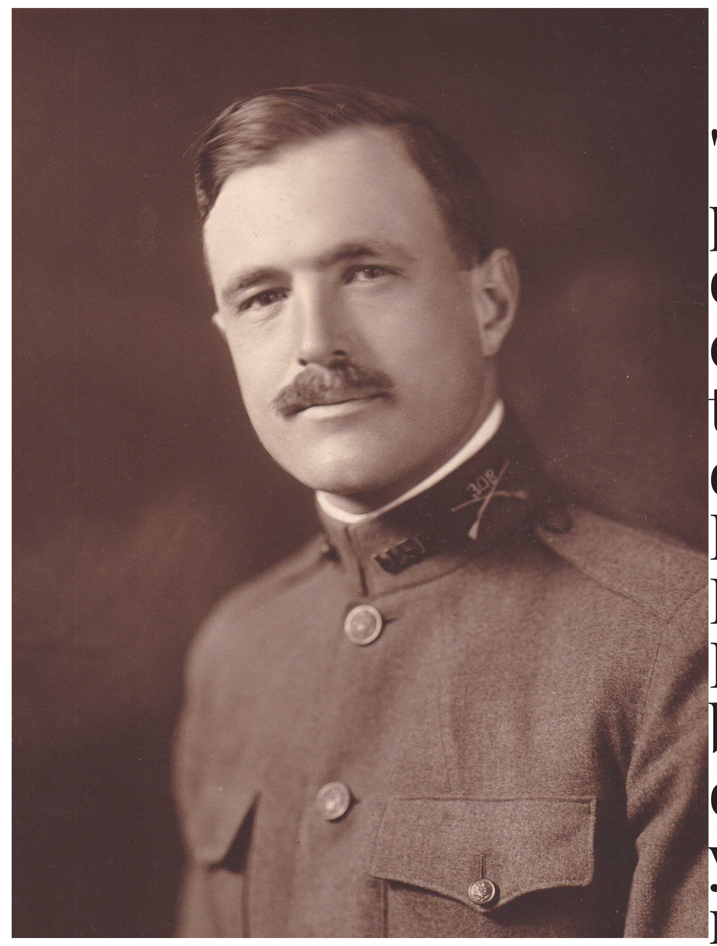
Born in Saukenuk, near present-day Rock Island, Illinois, Black Hawk was a Sauk leader who spent his life resisting the loss of his people's lands. He rejected the 1804 Treaty of St. Louis, which ceded millions of acres to the U.S., and allied with the British in the War of 1812, earning his band the name "British Band." In 1832, determined to reclaim his homeland, he led over 1,000 Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo people—many of them women and children—back across the Mississippi River into Illinois. This defiance ignited the Black Hawk War, a brief but brutal conflict. Though his band initially held off U.S. forces, they were ultimately overpowered. At the war's end, hundreds were killed at the Bad Axe River, and Black Hawk surrendered, marking a turning point for Native resistance in the region.

Following his capture, Black Hawk was held prisoner and paraded through Eastern cities, a display meant to affirm U.S. dominance. Yet he captivated crowds and even dictated an autobiography, Life of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kia-Kiak, one of the earliest Native American memoirs published. He was eventually released into the custody of his political rival, Keokuk—a final humiliation. In his later years, Black Hawk lived in Iowa, stripped of influence but still deeply respected by many. He died in 1838, never forgiving those he saw as betraying his people. Today, Black Hawk is remembered as a symbol of resilience, resistance, and the enduring struggle of Native nations to protect their homelands.

The Camp Pioneers

The Pioneers of Blackhawk

The Chicago Council appointed two experienced District Executives to lead the development of the Big Blue Lake property: West Side Executive Allen R. Carpenter and South Shore Executive Colonel Carroll Edson.



Colonel Carroll A. Edson

(1891-1986)

"Colonel Carroll Edson had a profound impact on the development of Owasippe and the expansion of its camps during the 1920s. A founder of the Order of the Arrow, he also established Camp West, Camp Blackhawk, and Moqua Lodge. As District Executive of the South Shore District, Edson was a driving force behind the inclusion and organization of African American youth in Chicago's Scouting movement.

Allan Roy Carpenter

(1889-1974)

Allan R. Carpenter was born in Washington and had moved to Chicago by 1920. He served as the West Side District Executive and was the founder and first Director of Camp Blackhawk. In the 1930s, he went on to serve as the Education Director for the Chicago Council before continuing his career as a professional Scouter in North Dakota.

Establishing a Camp

During the summer of 1925, under the leadership of Allan Carpenter, a small group of Scouts from the West Side District set out to survey and establish a new sub-camp on the recently acquired Big Blue Lake property. These Scouts laid out campsites and program areas that would stand for decades. Drawing inspiration from their time at Camp Shabbona, where they had learned much about the famed Sauk leader, they named their new camp after Black Hawk.

At the same time, Colonel Edson led a group of approximately 75 experienced Scouts from across Chicago in establishing what became known as the Pioneer Camp. These Scouts, all of whom held the rank of at least First Class, were tasked with the challenging work of forming trails, clearing campsites, developing camp infrastructure, and constructing buildings. In addition to their labor, they received instruction in Camping and Pioneering Merit Badges. Their efforts were rewarded with unique experiences not available to Scouts at Crystal Lake, including a trip to White Lake for Sea Scouting training aboard a Sea Scout Ship.

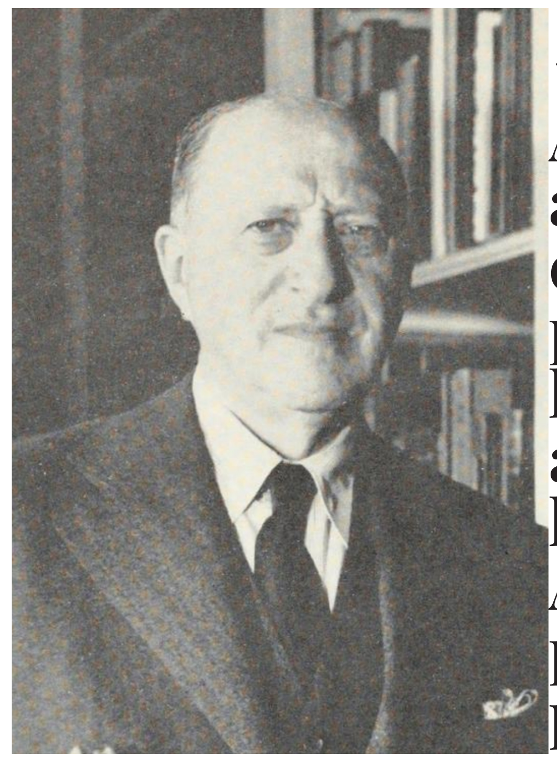
Divisional Program

In 1925, Allan Carpenter introduced an experimental program at Camp Blackhawk that he later described as so successful that he expanded upon it in subsequent years. Known as the Divisional Program, it divided older Scouts into five 'divisions' or specialized groups: Pioneers, Indians, Engineers, Coast Guard, and Sea Scouts. Each division had distinct responsibilities, sleeping arrangements, and themed "uniforms" during their time at camp.

The Pioneers, who slept in Adirondack shelters and wore buckskin shawls and coats, were responsible for constructing features such as Teker's Bridge, the Council Fire Ring, and the camp's diving tower. The Indians, who slept in tepees and wore Native-inspired regalia, built a longhouse, created new trails, and crafted items like grass mats. They earned feathers to mark their progress through ranks such as brave, warrior, and chief.

The Engineers often spent days away from camp "out on the line," surveying through deep woods and swamps, returning every few days. The Coast Guard division taught non-swimmers—referred to as "sinkers"—how to swim and served as lifeguards. The Sea Scouts, similar in role, constructed a sailing vessel by converting a clinker rowboat with a canvas tent sail for use on Big Blue Lake.

This specialized program was reserved for the older Scouts in camp, while the younger Scouts participated in traditional activities such as the annual treasure hunt, outdoor cooking, fireworks, and the camp barbecue. At the time, the campsites were named after various Native American tribes, including the Mononee (Menominee), Sacs, Kaskaskias, and Pottawatomies, with the Ottawas added later. Unlike today, the camps did not number their campsites but instead named them after things such as the Scout Law or other tribes.

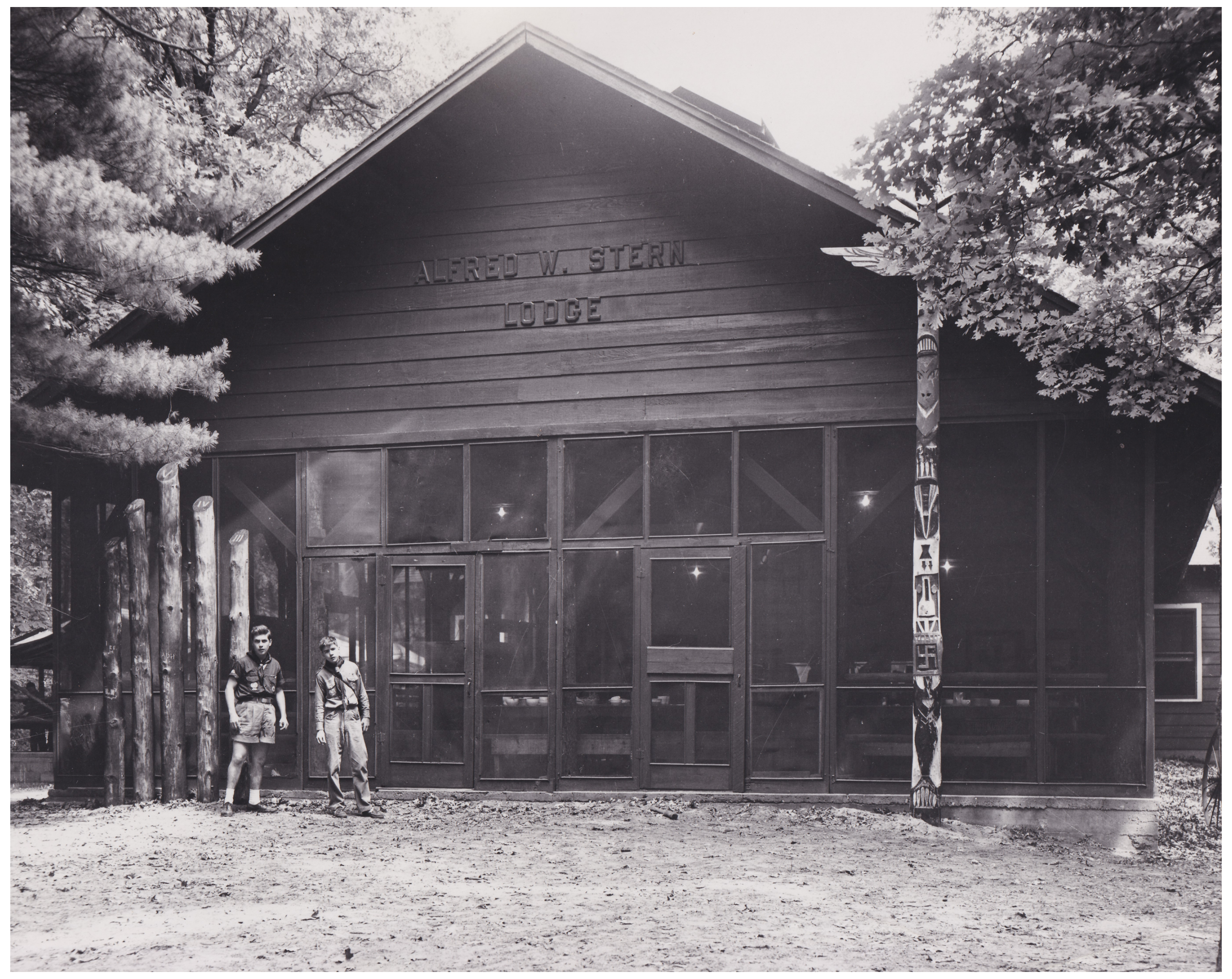


Alfred Whittal Stern (1881 - 1960)

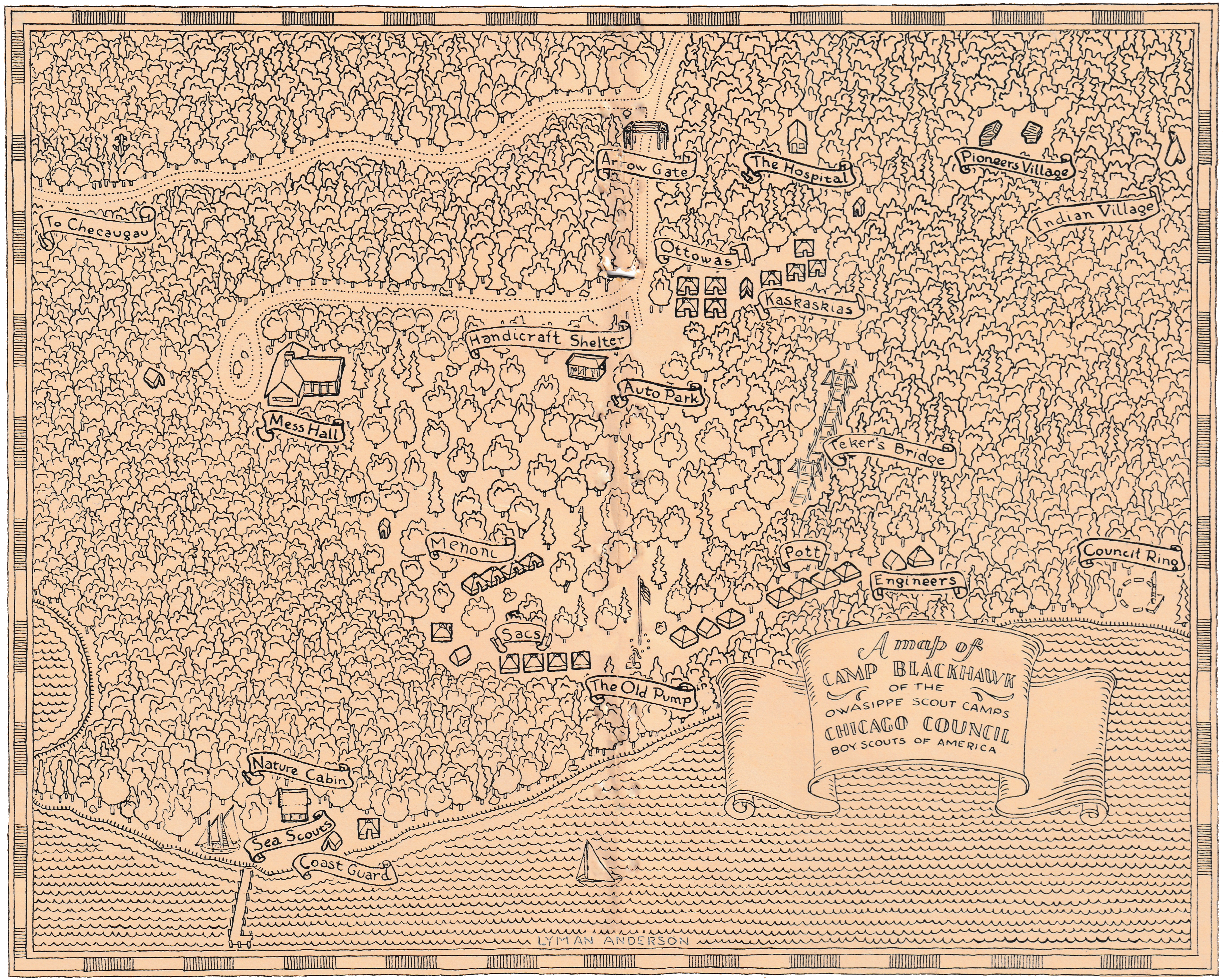
Alfred Stern was a Chicago businessman and philanthropist known for his deep commitment to his community. A passionate admirer of Abraham Lincoln, he spent his life collecting Lincoln-related artifacts and ultimately donated the largest private collection to the National Archives. In the 1920s, Stern served as vice president of the Chicago Council and played a significant role in the development of Camp Blackhawk. In 1926, he donated $5,000 for the construction of a dining hall at the camp and contributed an additional $5,000 for the purchase of more property on Big Blue Lake.

Alfred W. Stern Lodge

The Alfred W. Stern Lodge was a distinctive building, with a main dining room whose walls were made of wire mesh screens. Its structural posts were barked logs that retained their bark, contributing to Blackhawk's reputation as a truly rustic "woods camp." This aesthetic was consistent throughout Blackhawk at the time, where all buildings were constructed from logs. The dining room measured 64 feet by 35 feet, while the kitchen was 62 feet by 20 feet. In 1929, the Stern Lodge operated a Kosher kitchen for Jewish Scouts, in an effort to encourage parents to allow their sons to attend camp. It is believed to be among the first Kosher kitchens ever established at a Scout camp. From 1927 until 1980, the Stern Lodge served thousands of meals to campers at Camp Blackhawk, Camp Pioneer, Camp Wilderness, and Camp Belnap. It was torn down in 1980.

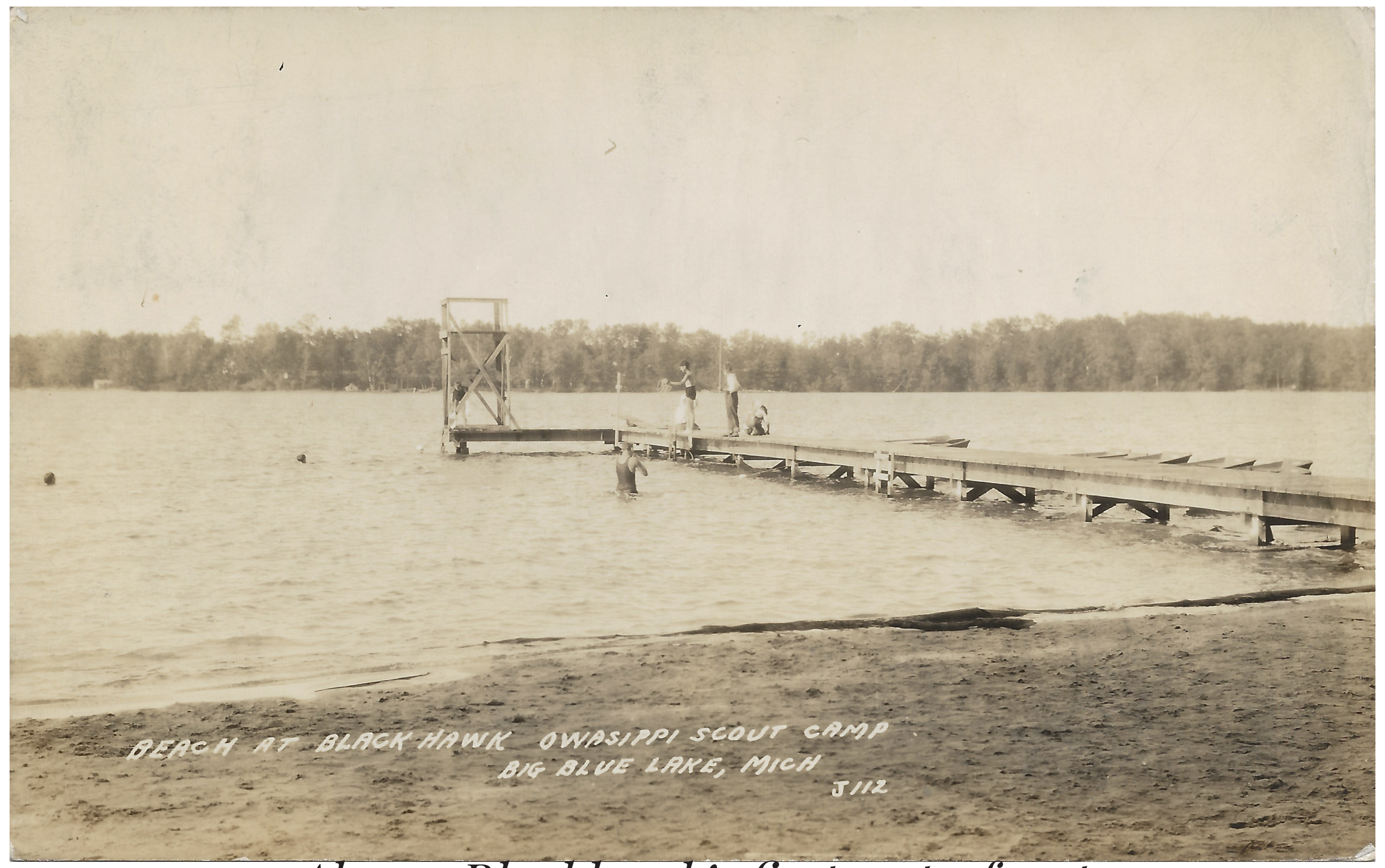


Camp Layout of the 1920's


Arrow Gate
The Hospital
Pioneers Village
Indian Village
To Checaugau
Ottowas
Kaskaskias
Handicraft Shelter
Mess Hall
Auto Park
Teker's Bridge
Menoni
Pott
Engineers
Council Ring
Sacs
The Old Pump
A map of
CAMP BLACKHAWK
OF THE
OWASIPPE SCOUT CAMPS
CHICAGO COUNCIL
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
Nature Cabin
Sea Scouts
Coast Guard
LYMAN ANDERSON

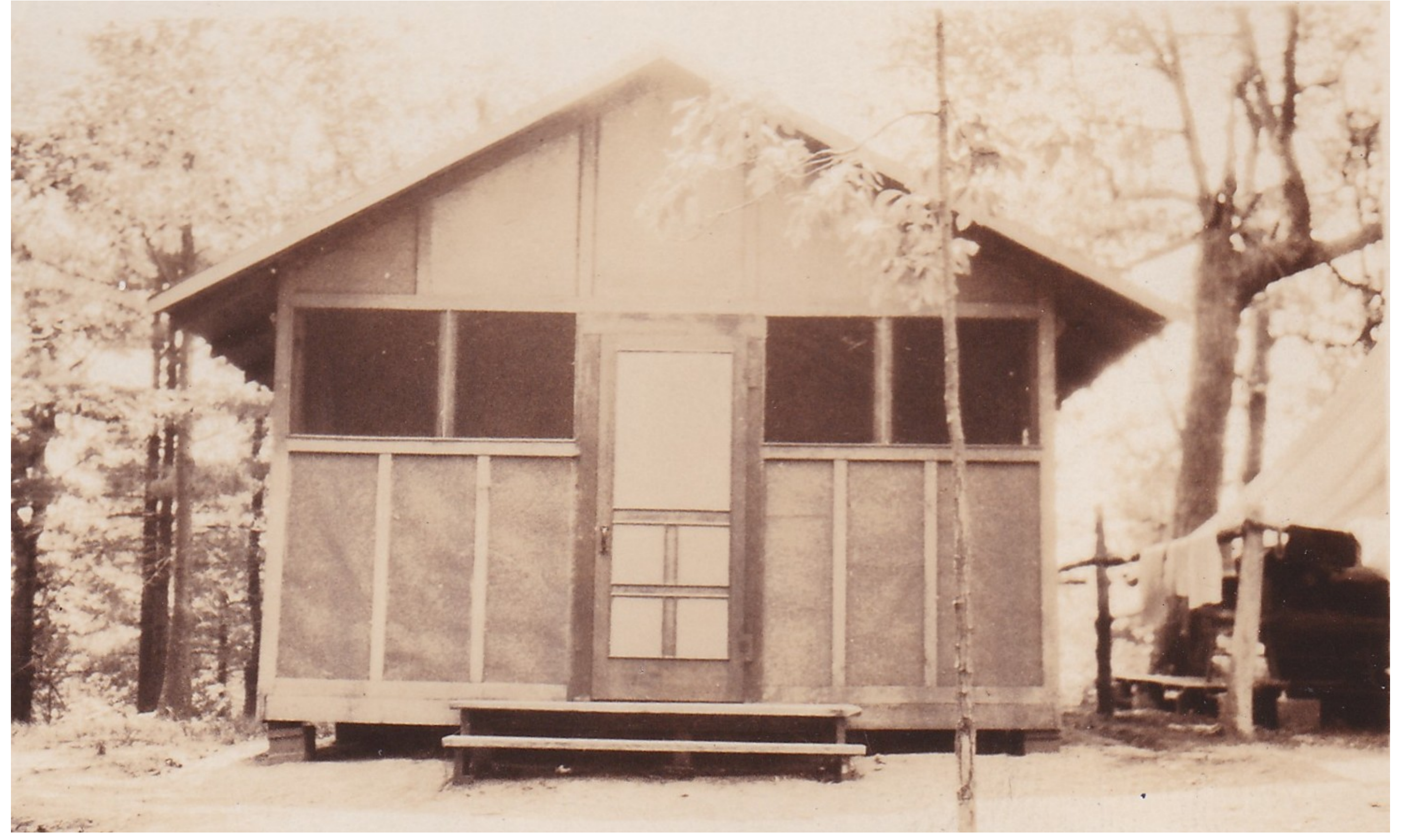
1928 Map of Camp Blackhawk

Sights of the 20's

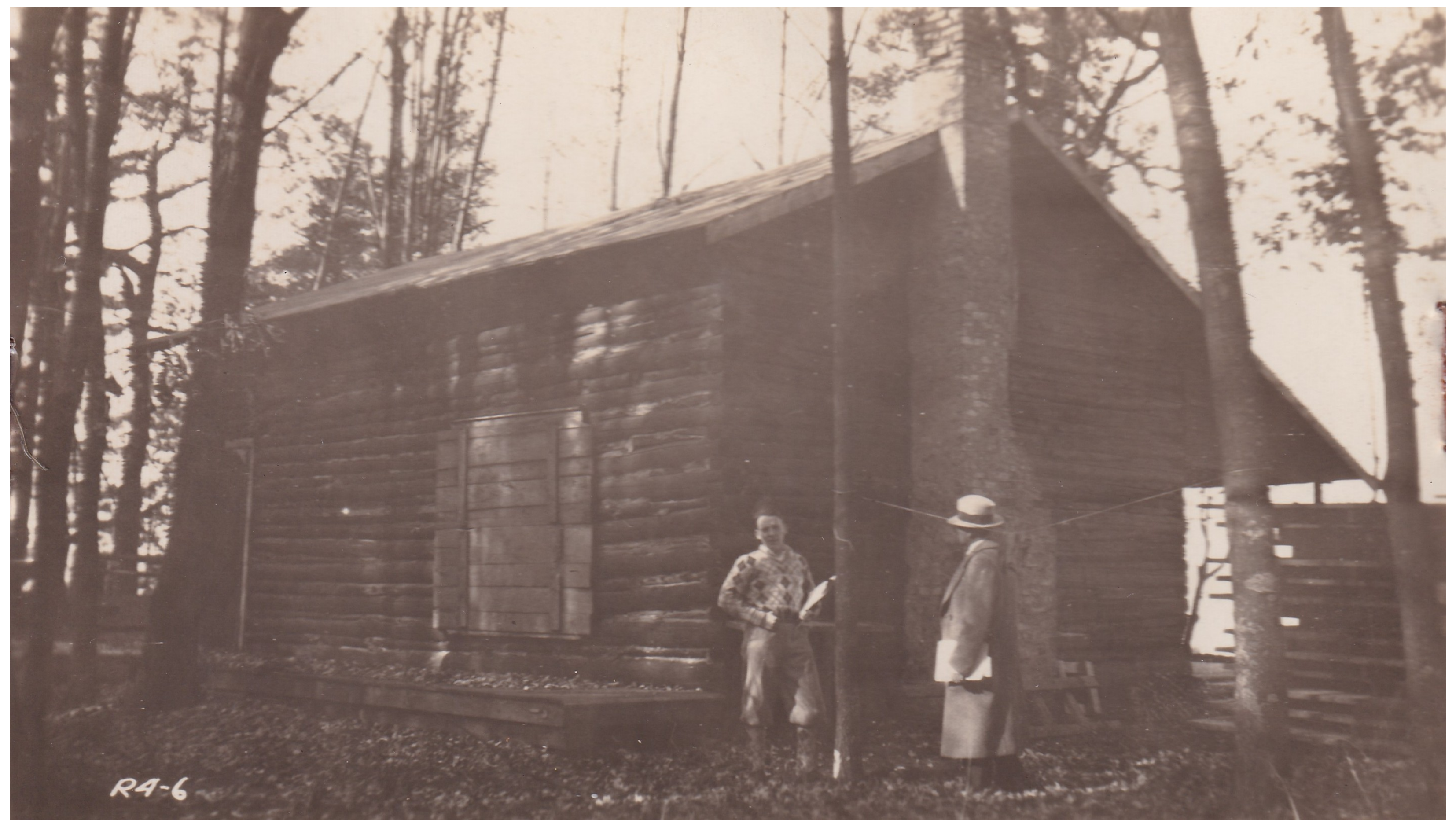

BEACH AT BLACK HAWK OWASIPPI SCOUT CAMP
BIG BLUE LAKE, MICH
J112

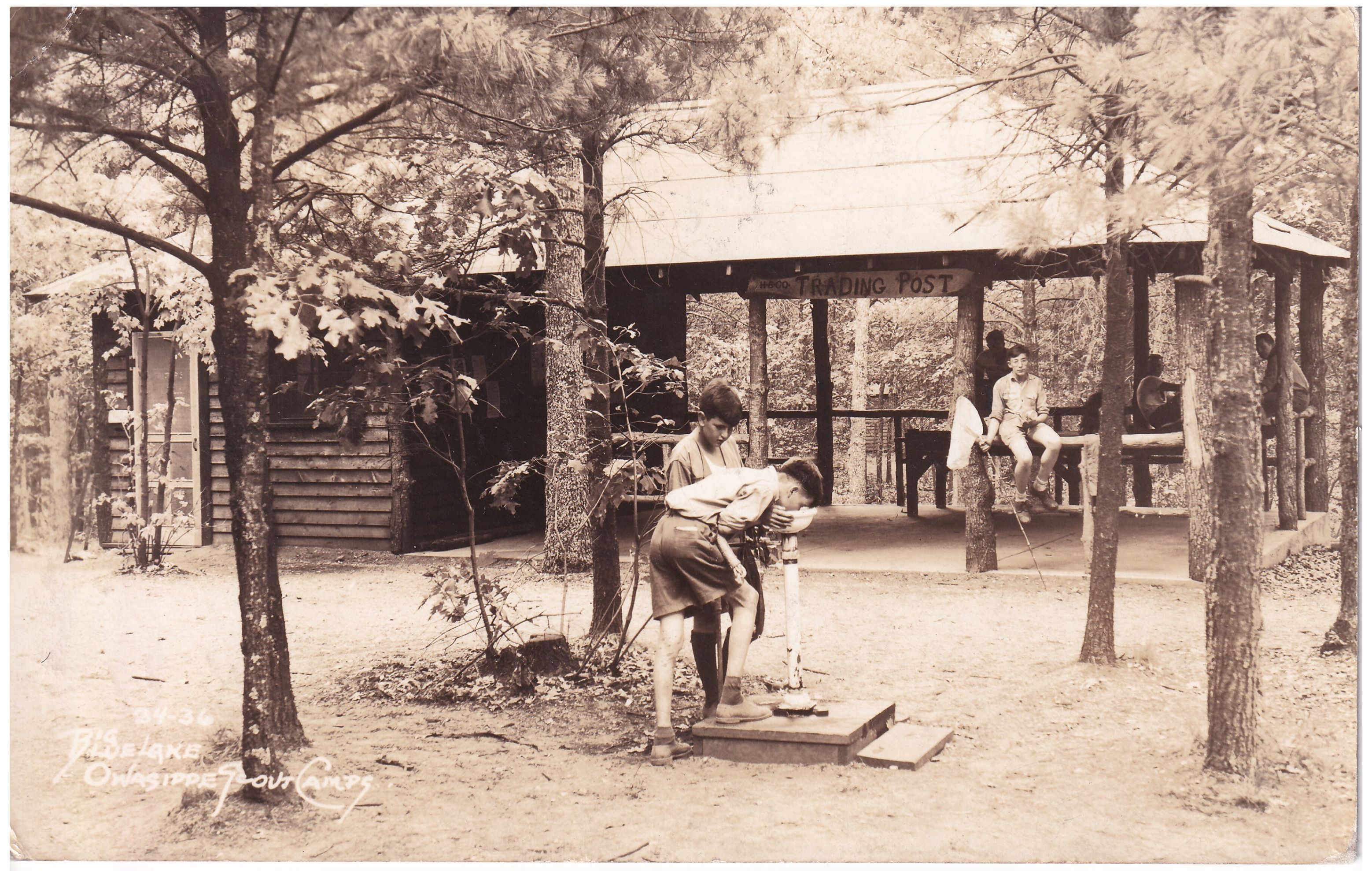
Above: Blackhawk's first waterfront

Below: Hospital



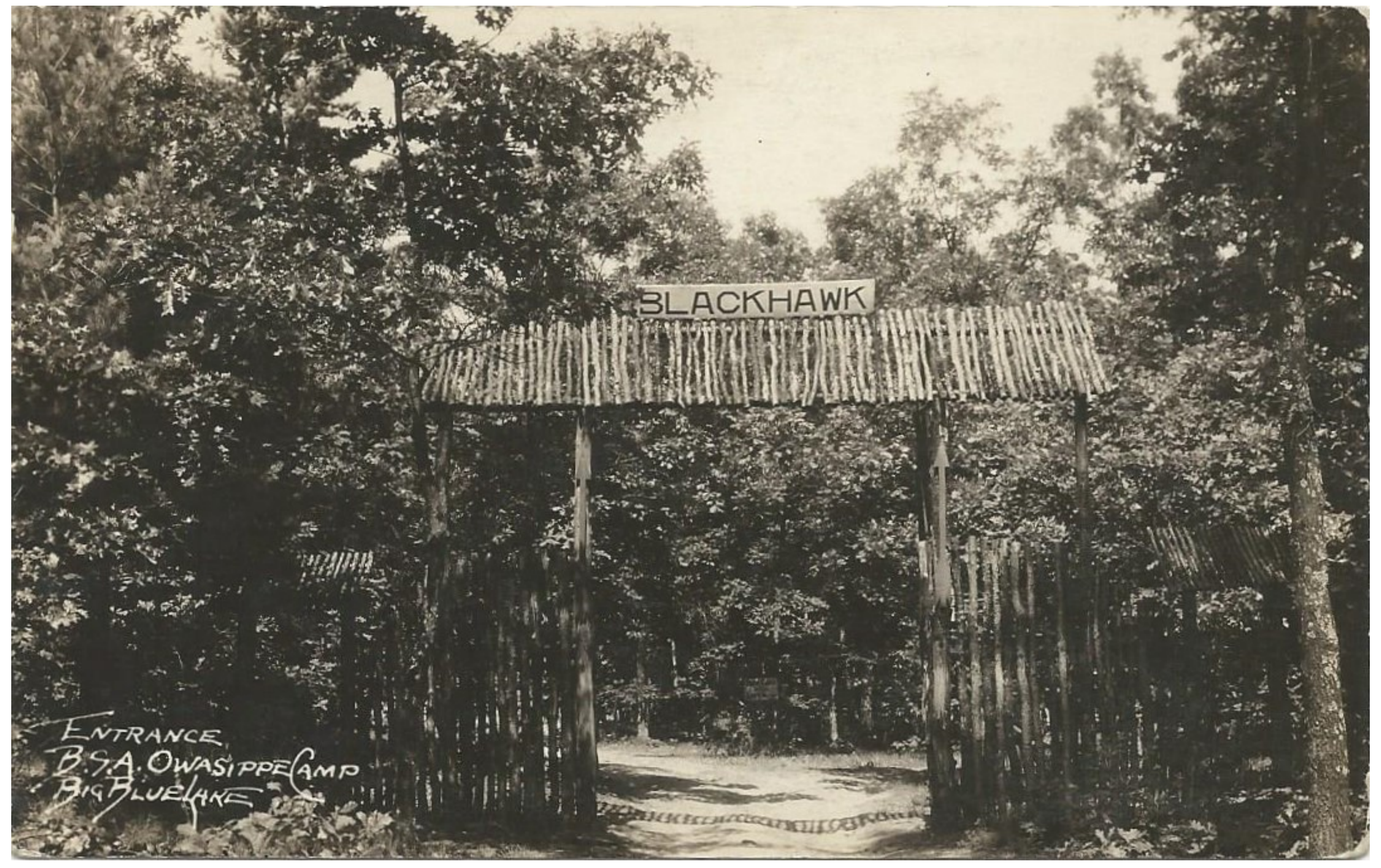
Below: Cabin which was originally located on the waterfront and moved to a new location before being demolished in 1940



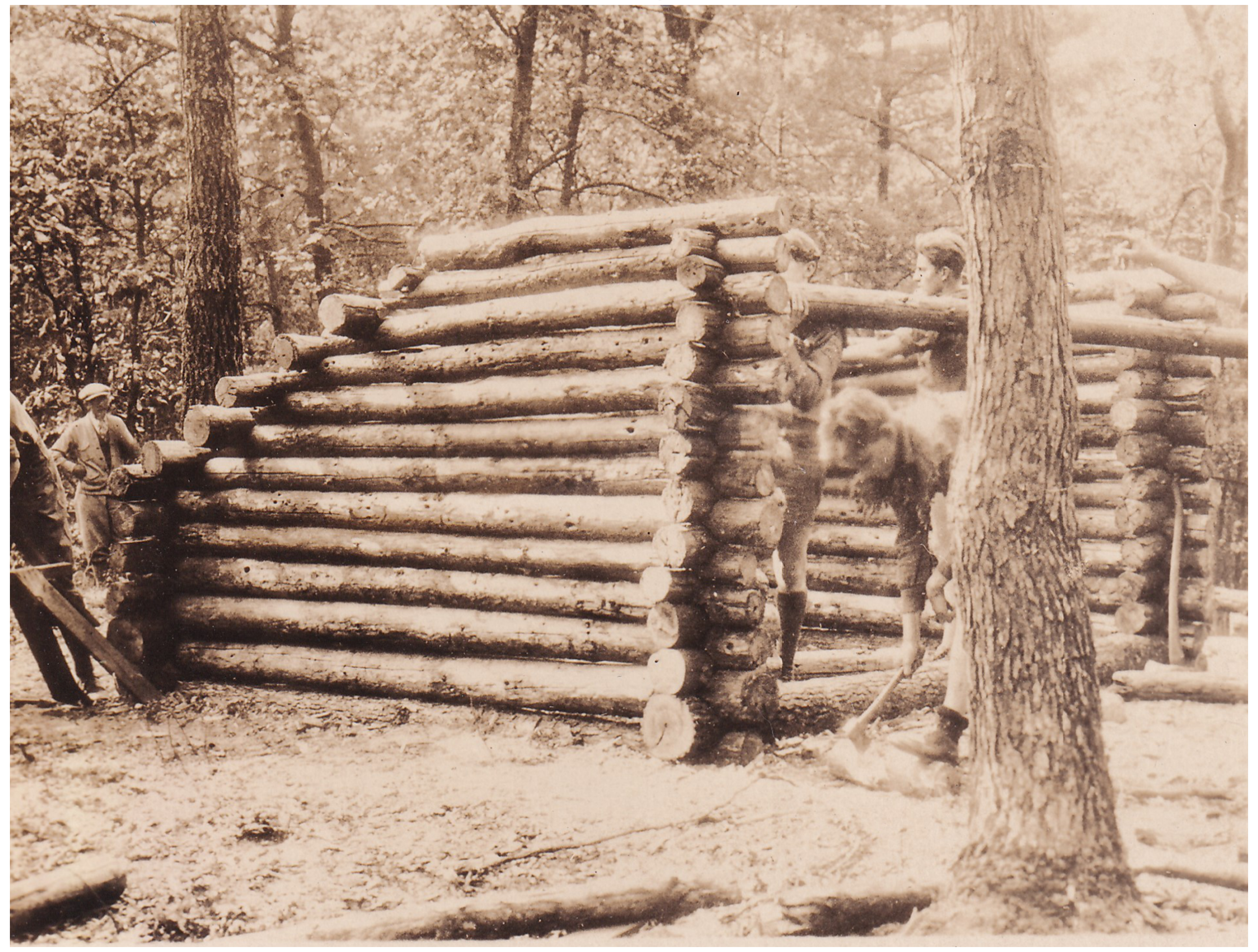

TRADING POST
34-36
Big Blue Lake
Owasippe Scout Camps

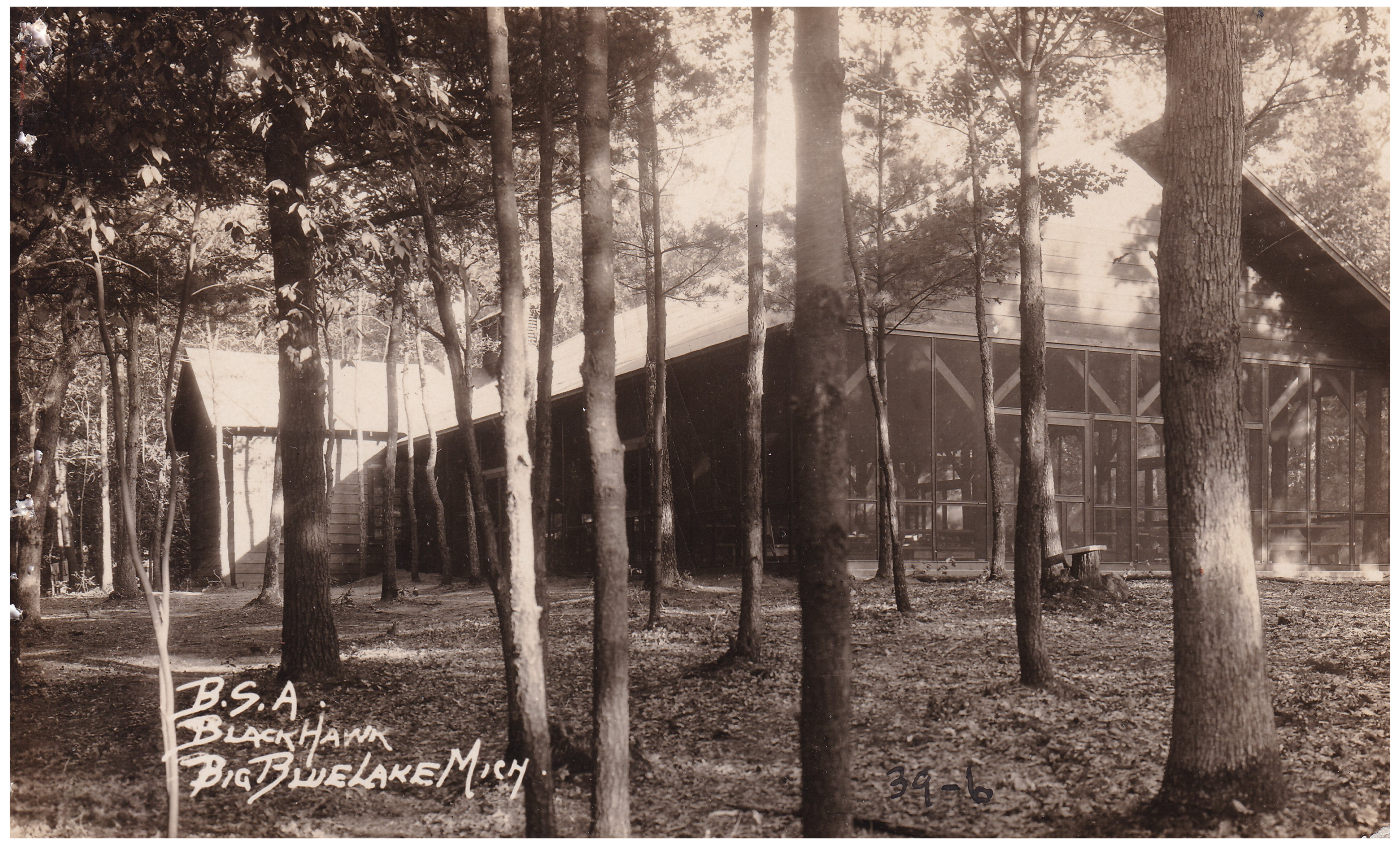
Above: Handicraft Shelter later turned trading post

Below: The 'Arrow Gate'


BLACKHAWK
Entrance
B.S.A. Owasippe Camp
Big Blue Lake

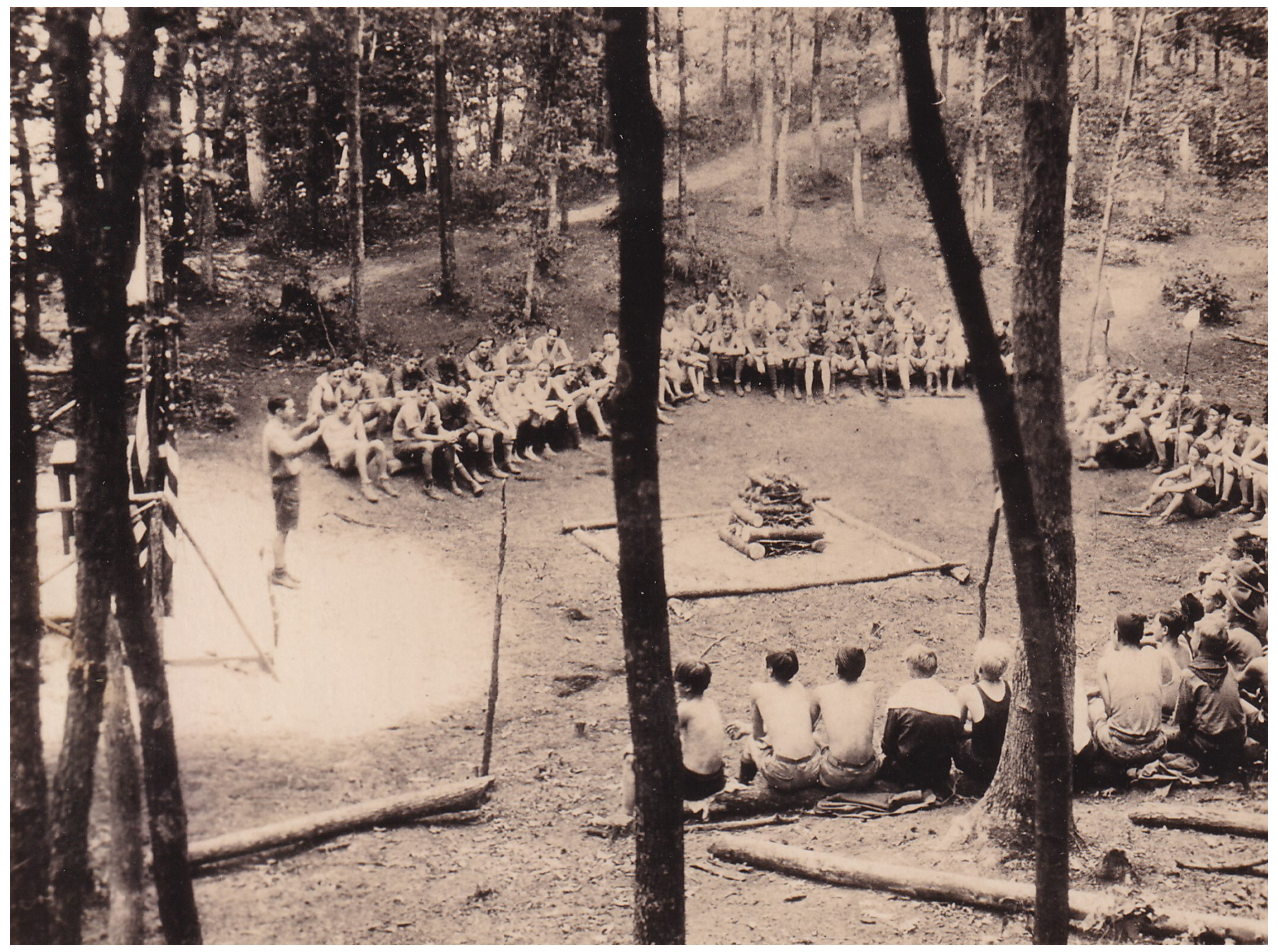
Below: Scouts constructing Adirondacks lean-tos



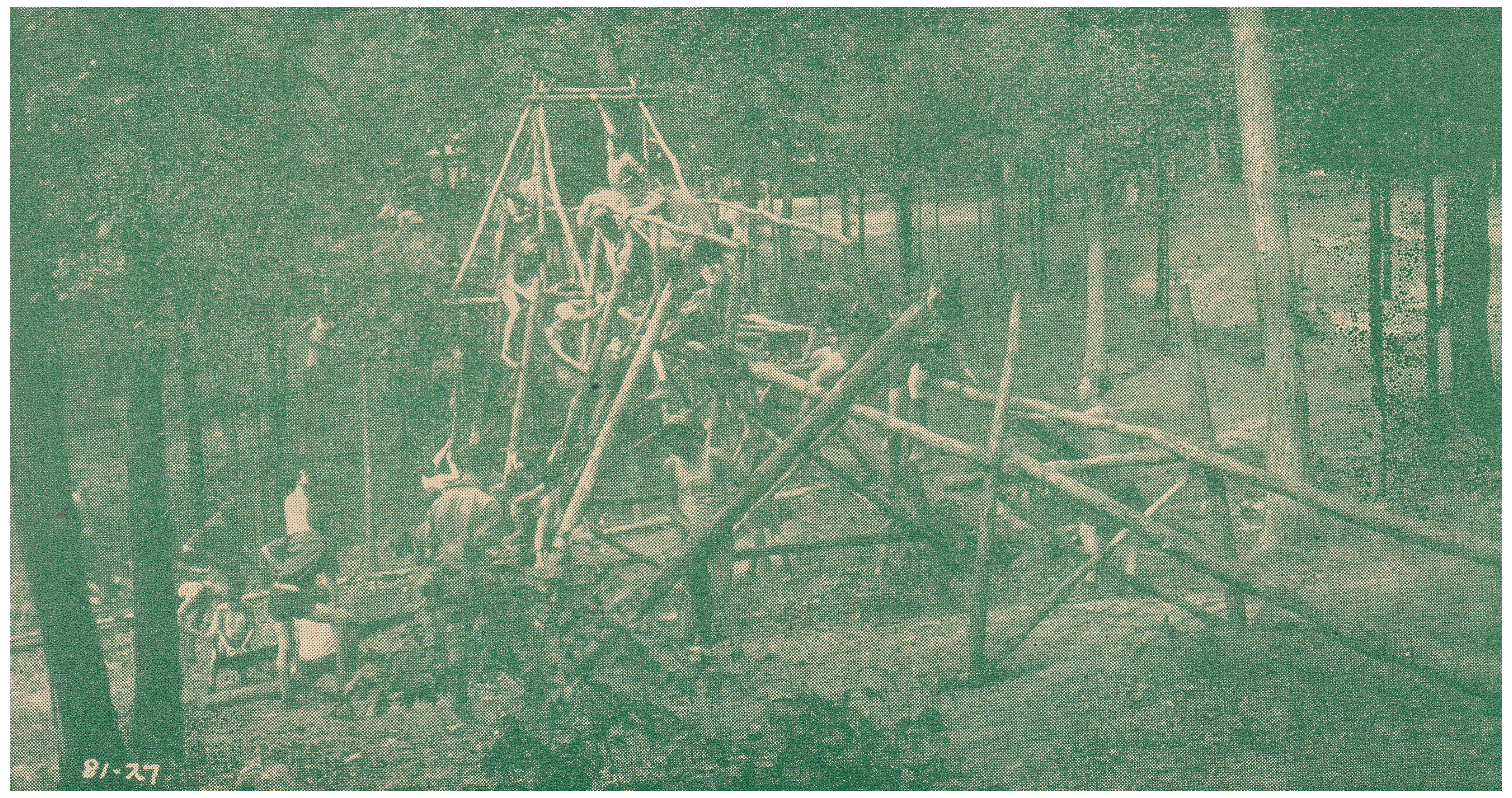

B.S.A.
Blackhawk
Big Blue Lake Mich

Above: The Alfred W. Stern Lodge, Blackhawk's Dining Hall

Below: The Council Fire Ring



Below: Teker's Bridge (85ft pioneering project)



The Great Depression

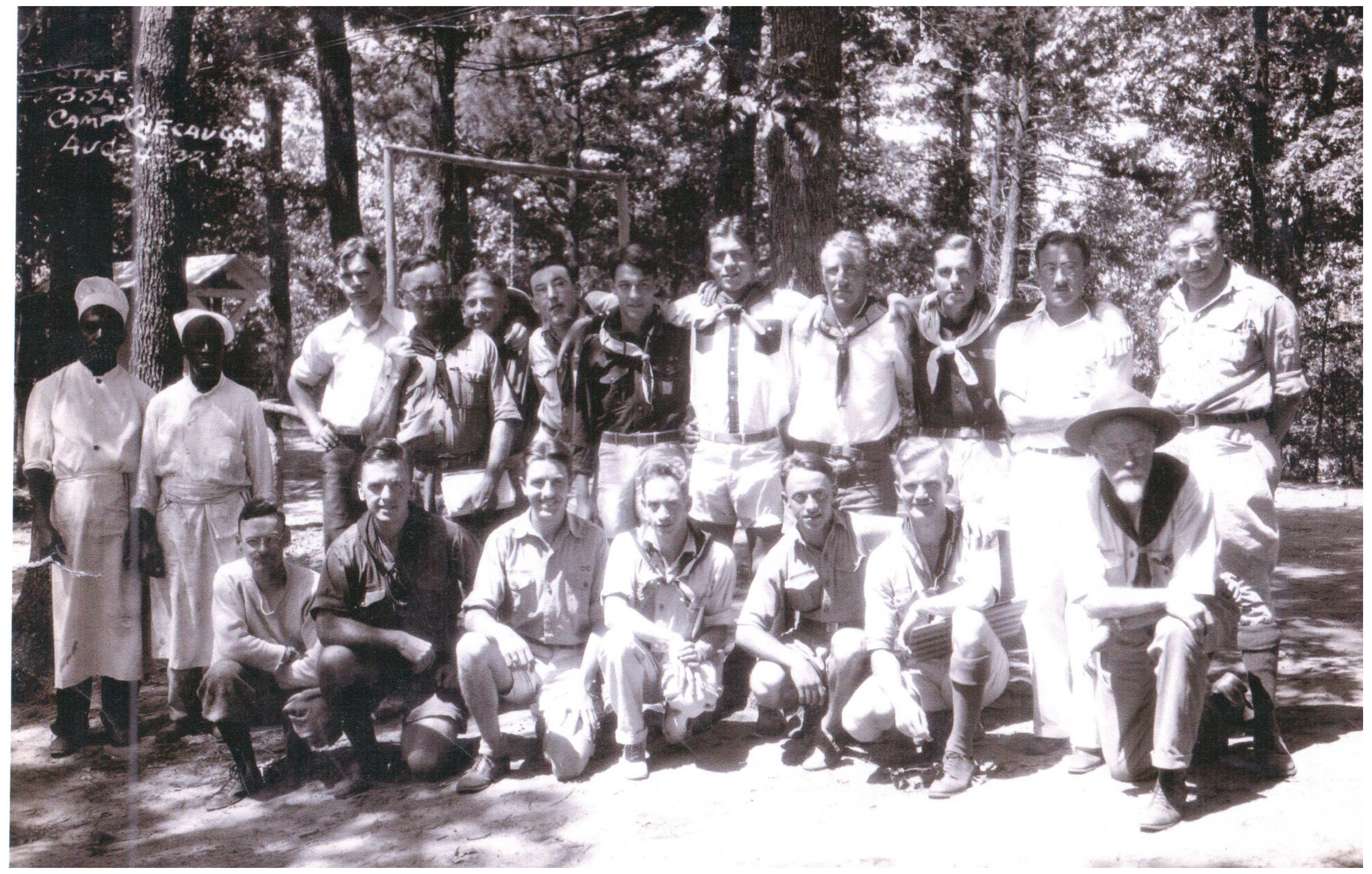
The Fall of Big Blue

The Great Depression caused attendance at Owasippe to plummet. The Chicago Council initially attempted to operate as usual, hoping the Depression would ease, but it persisted. Many Scouts were forced to attend more affordable camps in the Cook County Forest Preserves, such as Camp Kiwanis, while others were forced to leave Scouting altogether. In 1931, 2,800 Scouts attended Owasippe; by 1932, that number had dropped to 1,700, with even fewer attending in 1933. Although the sub-camps at Owasippe operated at half capacity, their operating expenses remained unchanged. As a result, the Chicago Council was forced to consolidate sub-camps to improve efficiency. Camp Blackhawk and Camp Checaugau—located east of Blackhawk and serving Scouts from the Northwest District—were combined under a single staff in 1932. Facilities from both camps were used that season. Despite the hardship, Scouts declared that "Old Man Depression can't defeat them," and they were determined to have the best camping season ever in 1932. However, the worsening economic conditions forced the joint camp to close after that year.

A Cheaper Alternative

In 1933, Gerry Blake, Scoutmaster of Troop 607, brought his troop to Camp Blackhawk and began a practice that continues to this day: the lone-troop camp. The Chicago Council, eager for any opportunity that may help restore attendance to pre-Depression levels, embraced the idea and established a minimally staffed, efficient, and cost-effective new sub-camp—Camp Wilderness.

Below: 1932 Checaugau Camp Staff

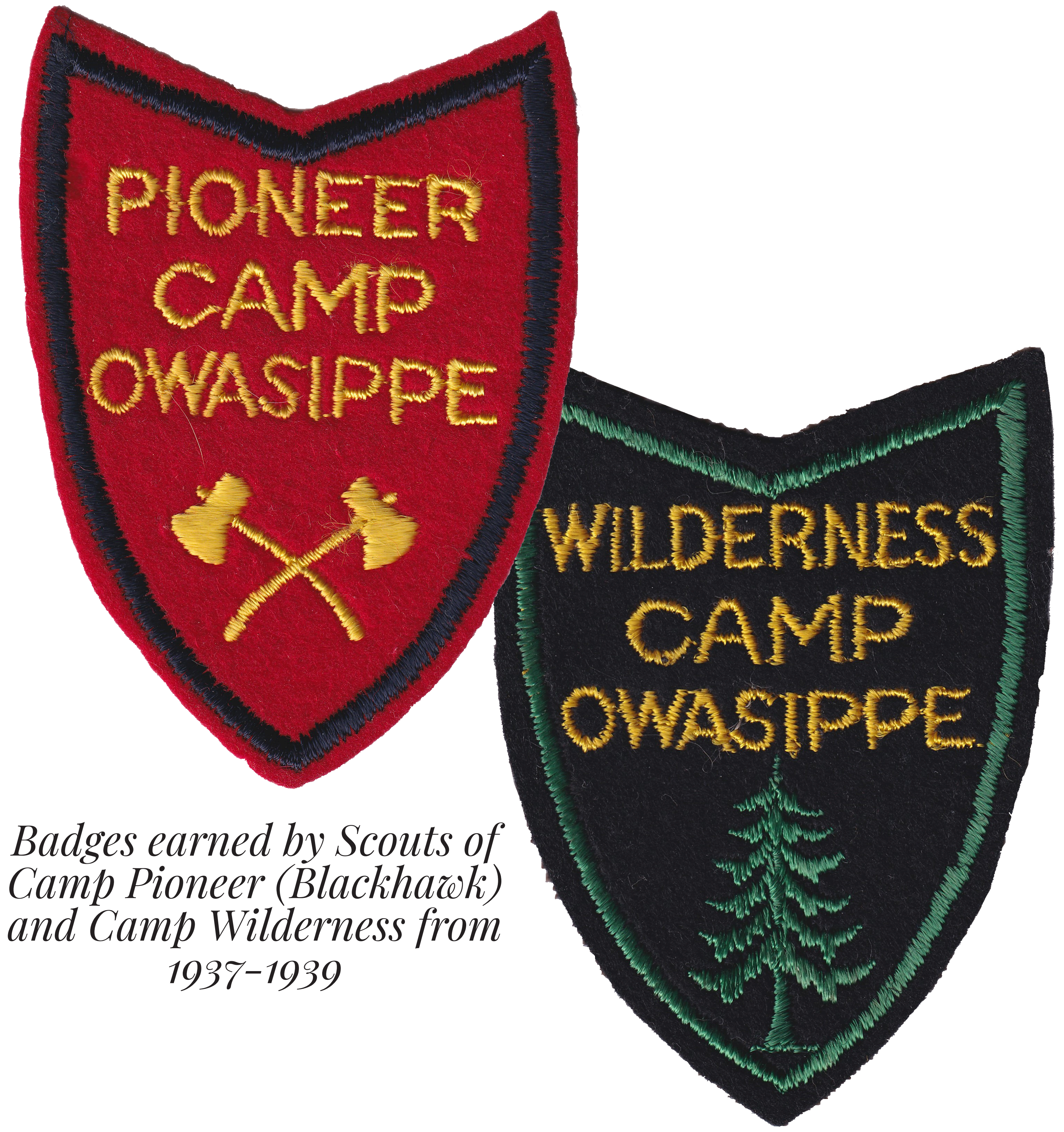


Camp Wilderness

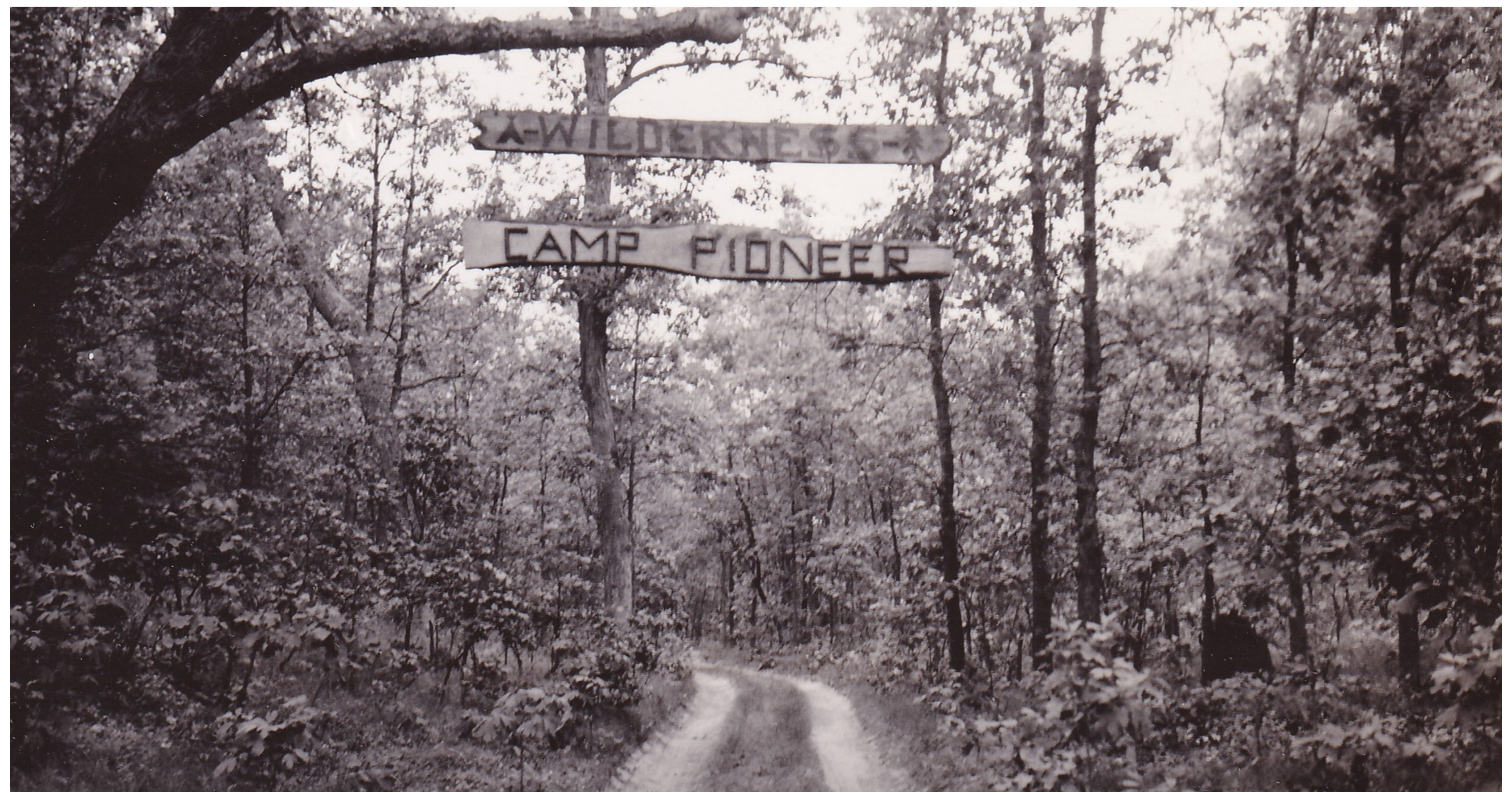
Camp Wilderness officially opened in 1934 with 1933 being a trial run for the camp. The camp only provided a skeleton crew of staff with a director, referred to as the 'factor', and aquatic staff for safety and program. The Factor would order materials and supplies as requested by the troop and the troop was left to cook their own meals and provide their own program. Council had a tough time in attracting Troops to Camp Wilderness though those who did attend reported having a swell time. This was not so much of a problem as it was decided that a lower population at Camp Wilderness would enhance the experience for its campers.

Rebirth

By 1937 the effects of the Depression lessened, the Scout population began to steadily return to pre-Depression levels. This resurgence was long awaited and prompted the decision to reopen Blackhawk and to relocate Wilderness 100 yards to the west—the future site of the "new" Blackhawk. Though Blackhawk would reopen under the name Camp Pioneer.



Badges earned by Scouts of Camp Pioneer (Blackhawk) and Camp Wilderness from 1937-1939

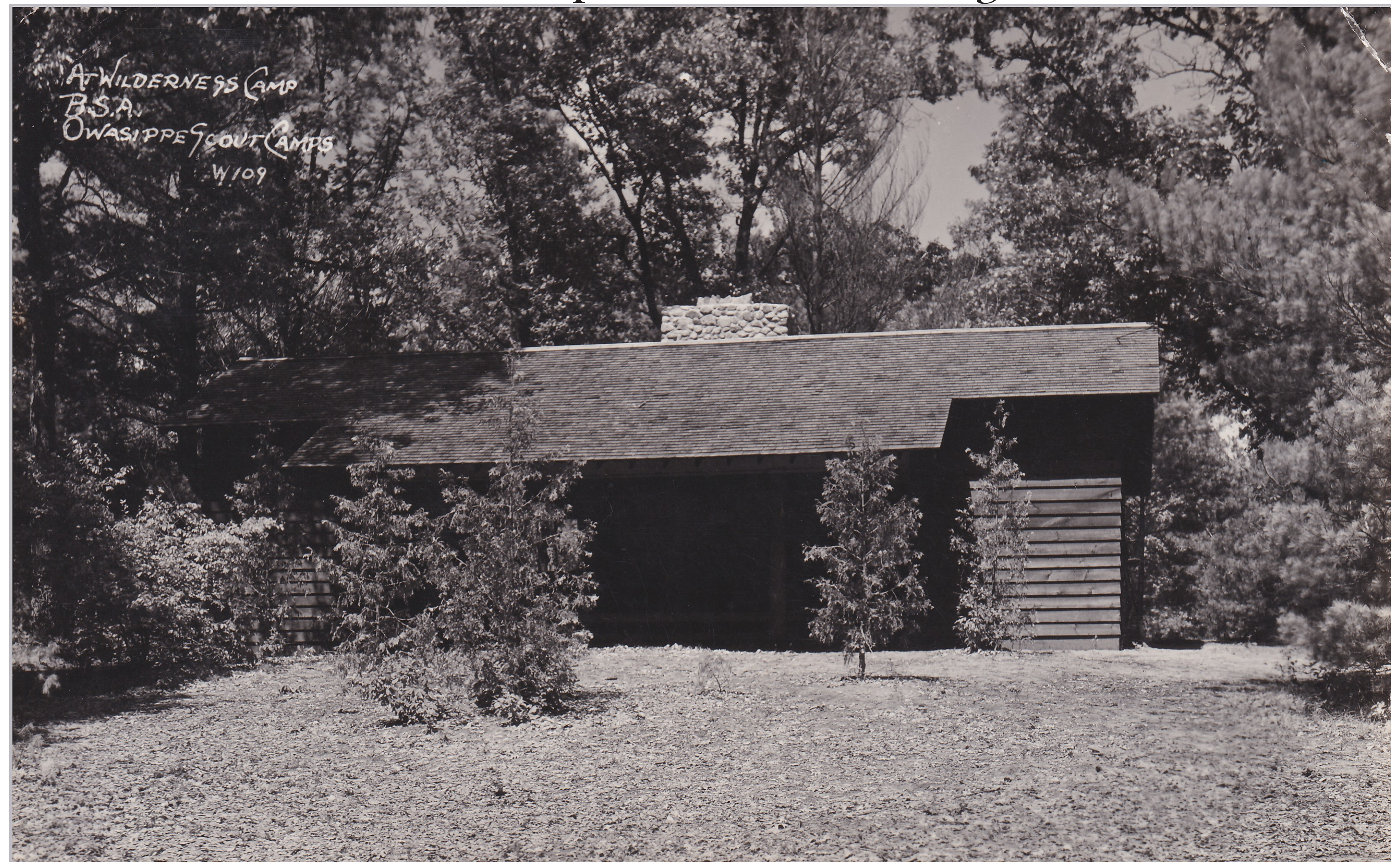


Above: Entrance to Camps Wilderness and Pioneer 1937

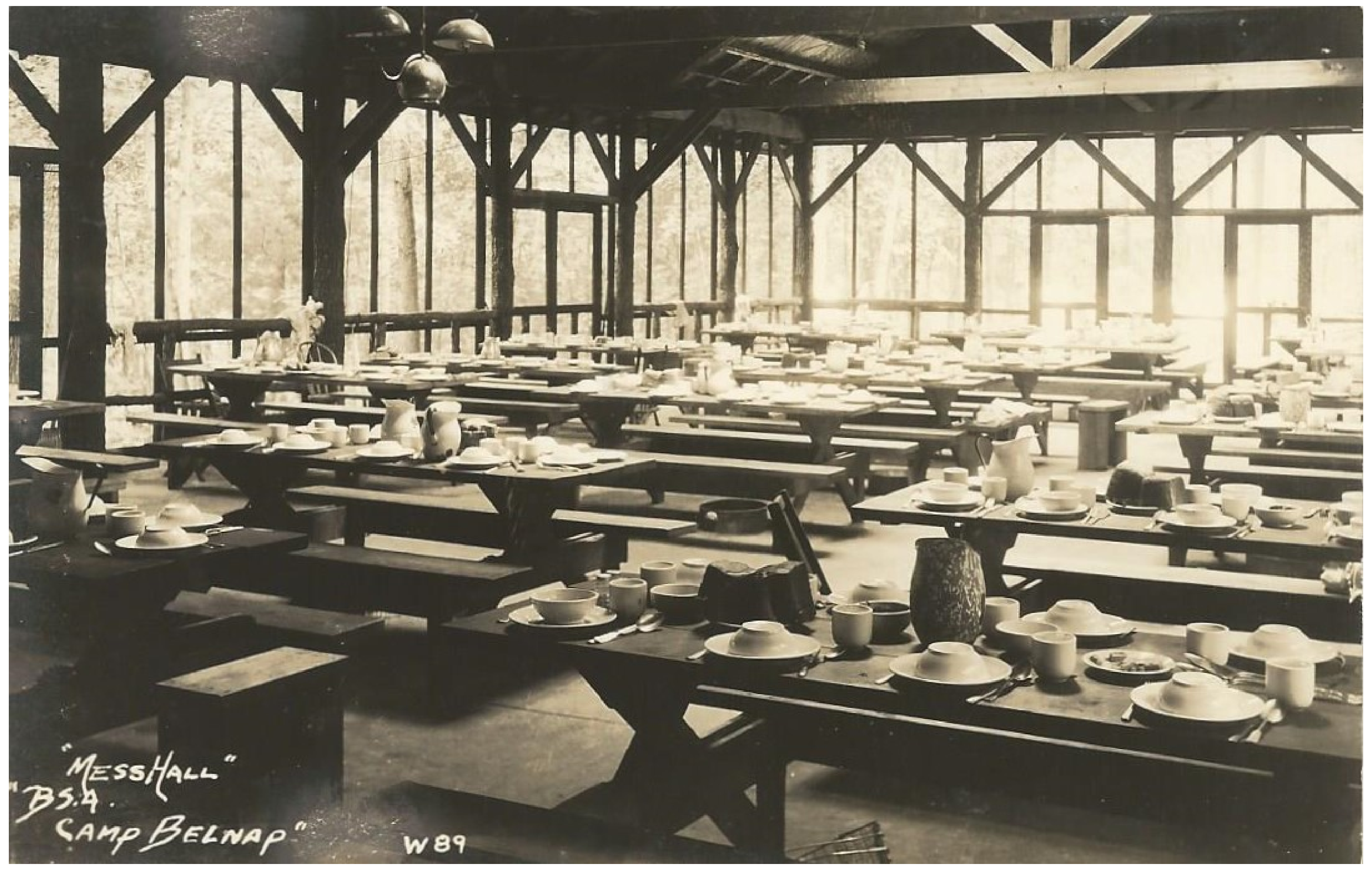
Camp Pioneer

The name Pioneer references the original Pioneer Camp founded by Col. Carroll Edson, which was merged with Camp Blackhawk in 1926. The reasoning behind renaming Blackhawk is uncertain. Some believe it stemmed from the unwavering loyalty and pride that each district held for its respective camp. At the time, Alfred Nichols Jr., the Reservation Director, was strongly advocating for the end of district-based camping. Perhaps this influenced the decision to rename Blackhawk. Camp Checaugau, meanwhile, suffered a devastating fire in 1936 and never reopened. If renaming a camp could encourage former Checaugau Scouts to attend Blackhawk, the Chicago Council likely saw it as a worthwhile move.

Below: Camp Wilderness Factor's Cabin 1930's. Located near the current Camp Blackhawk Dining hall

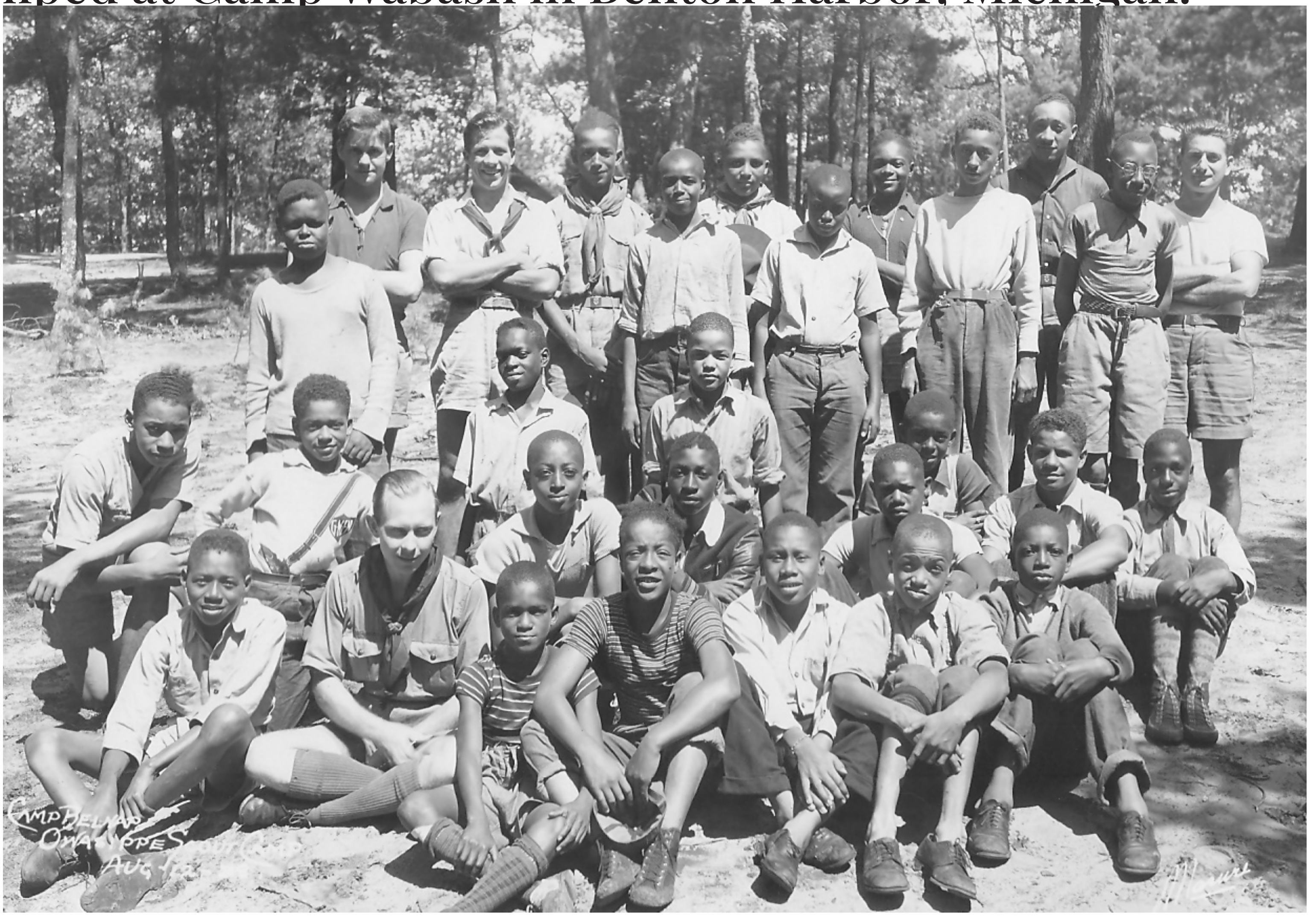


Segregation and Integration



Camp Belnap

In the early 20th century, the Chicago Council operated under a "separate but equal" policy. While African American boys appear to have been eligible to join Scouting from the movement's start in 1910, it's unclear whether they were permitted to join predominantly white troops. In 1924, Chicago leadership believed that Black youth would be more comfortable and successful in Scouting under Black leadership. The South Shore District, led by Colonel Carroll Edson, launched a campaign to raise $10,000 to create a segregated district and hire a Black Scout Executive. The effort succeeded, and in 1925 the Douglas Division was established, with Mason Fields becoming Chicago's first African American District Executive. That year, the division camped at Camp Wabash in Benton Harbor, Michigan.



To align with the Council's goal of consolidating camps at Owasippe, the Douglas Division received its own Owasippe sub-camp in 1926: Camp Belknap, named for Civil War veteran and Grand Rapids Scouter Capt. Charles Belknap. Though the name was intended to change that first year, only the "k" was dropped, and it became known as Camp Belnap. Located five miles southeast of Camp Blackhawk, it adhered to the Council's segregation policy. The Great Depression hit Chicago's Black community especially hard, reducing attendance and leading to the original Belnap site's abandonment in 1932. The camp was then relocated to Hiawatha Beach on Big Blue Lake, and in 1937, it moved again—this time to the site of Camp Pioneer (formerly Blackhawk). After Pioneer's season ended each year, the staff would remove the 'Camp Pioneer' signs and replace it with 'Camp Belnap' signs.

BIG BLUE LAKE
FROM
CAMP BELNAP
OWASIPPE SCOUT CAMPS.
W93

Left: 1937 Belnap Troop with two members of Camp Staff

Right: Belnap Campers utilizing the Craft Lodge

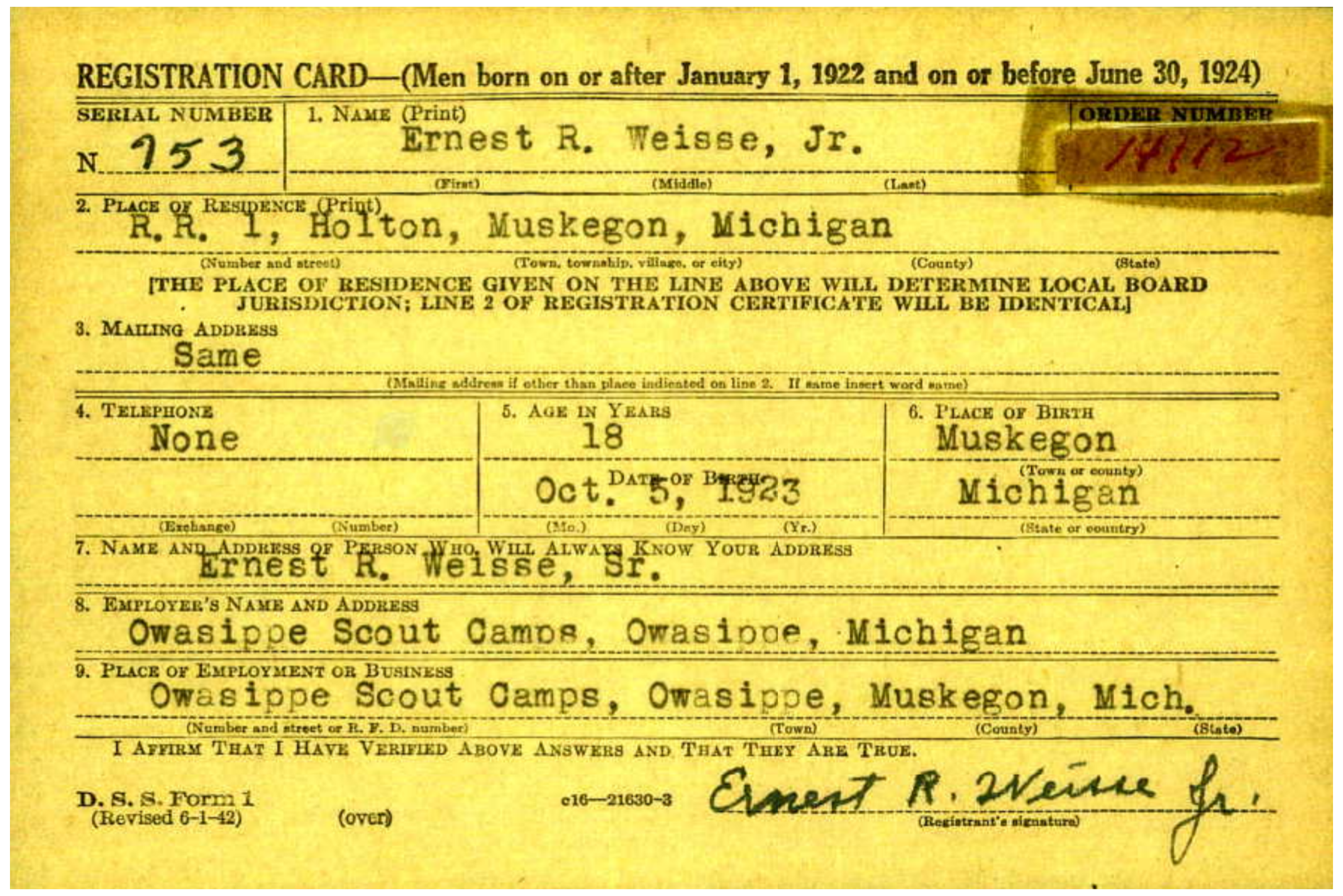
Top Right: Belnap Campers Swimming in Big Blue Lake

Top Left: Postcard in which the name Blackhawk was removed and replaced with Belnap

Though World War II forced Pioneer's closure, Belnap continued operating (relocating to Crystal Lake in 1942 for one summer but returning to Blackhawk again in 1943). By 1949, the Chicago Council ended its segregation policy, integrated the Douglas Division, and permanently closed Belnap—not necessarily out of moral reckoning, but seemingly as part of the broader move away from district-based camping. Many former Douglas Division Scouts chose to camp at Blackhawk post-integration. One of these Scouts, Emerson James, the first African American Vigil Honor recipient, served on the first fully integrated Camp Blackhawk staff.

CRAFT LODGE

World War II



REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after January 1, 1922 and on or before June 30, 1924)

SERIAL NUMBER N 753

1. NAME (Print) Ernest R. Weisse, Jr.
(First) (Middle) (Last)

ORDER NUMBER 14112

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) R.R. 1, Holton, Muskegon, Michigan
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS Same
(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE None
(Exchange) (Number)

5. AGE IN YEARS 18
DATE OF BIRTH Oct. 5, 1923
(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)

6. PLACE OF BIRTH Muskegon
(Town or county)
Michigan
(State or country)

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Ernest R. Weisse, Sr.

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS Owasippe Scout Camps, Owasippe, Michigan

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS Owasippe Scout Camps, Owasippe, Muskegon, Mich.
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

D. S. S. Form 1
(Revised 6-1-42)
(over)
c16—21630-3

Ernest R. Weisse Jr.
(Registrant's signature)

Above: Draft registration card of a staff member of Owasippe

Effects of War

Camp Pioneer operated normally from 1937 through 1941. However, the United States' entry into World War II, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, brought significant changes. In 1942, over three million Americans were drafted into military service, and nationwide rationing of food, gas, metal, and other resources began. Numerous draft registration cards from the period list Owasippe or the Chicago Council as employers, suggesting that many Scoutmasters, troop leaders, and older Scouts were lost to the war effort—deeply impacting Scouting and operations at Owasippe.

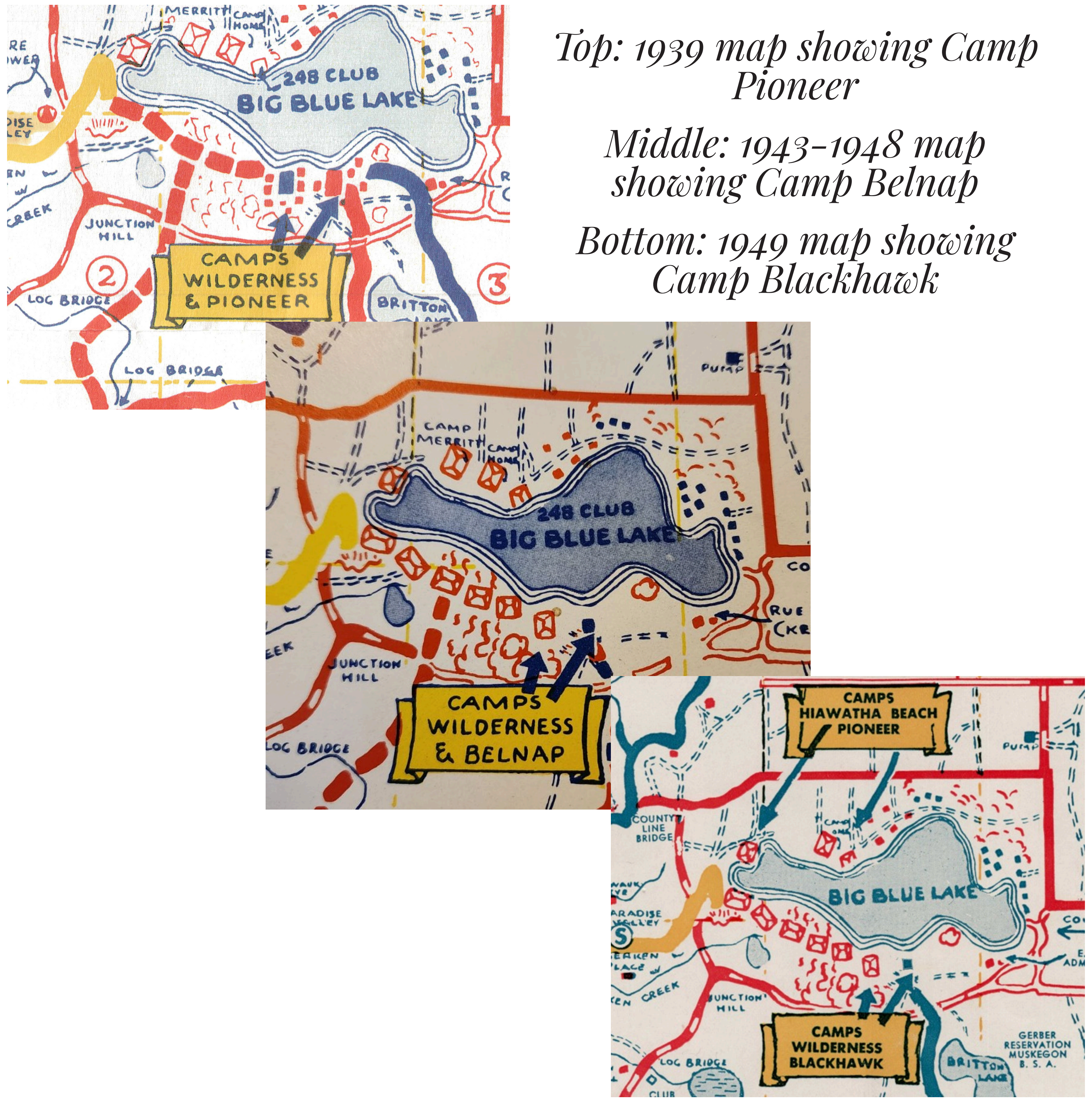
Transportation to camp became unreliable, as Scout camping was not a national priority. To accommodate wartime restrictions, Owasippe adjusted its session schedules to align with available train service. For example one camping period in 1942 began on Wednesday, August 5, and ended on Monday, August 17.

That year, the Chicago Council announced that all Owasippe operations—excluding Camp Wilderness—would be consolidated to the Crystal Lake camps. This led to the closure of Camp Pioneer, once again displacing the West Side District Scouts. Although the Blackhawk property remained unused during the summer of 1942, Camp Belnap continued the use of the Blackhawk property from 1943 through 1948. Additionally, the site hosted Winter Camp programs during those years.

Emergency Service Corps

EMERGENCY SERVICE
BSA
CORPS

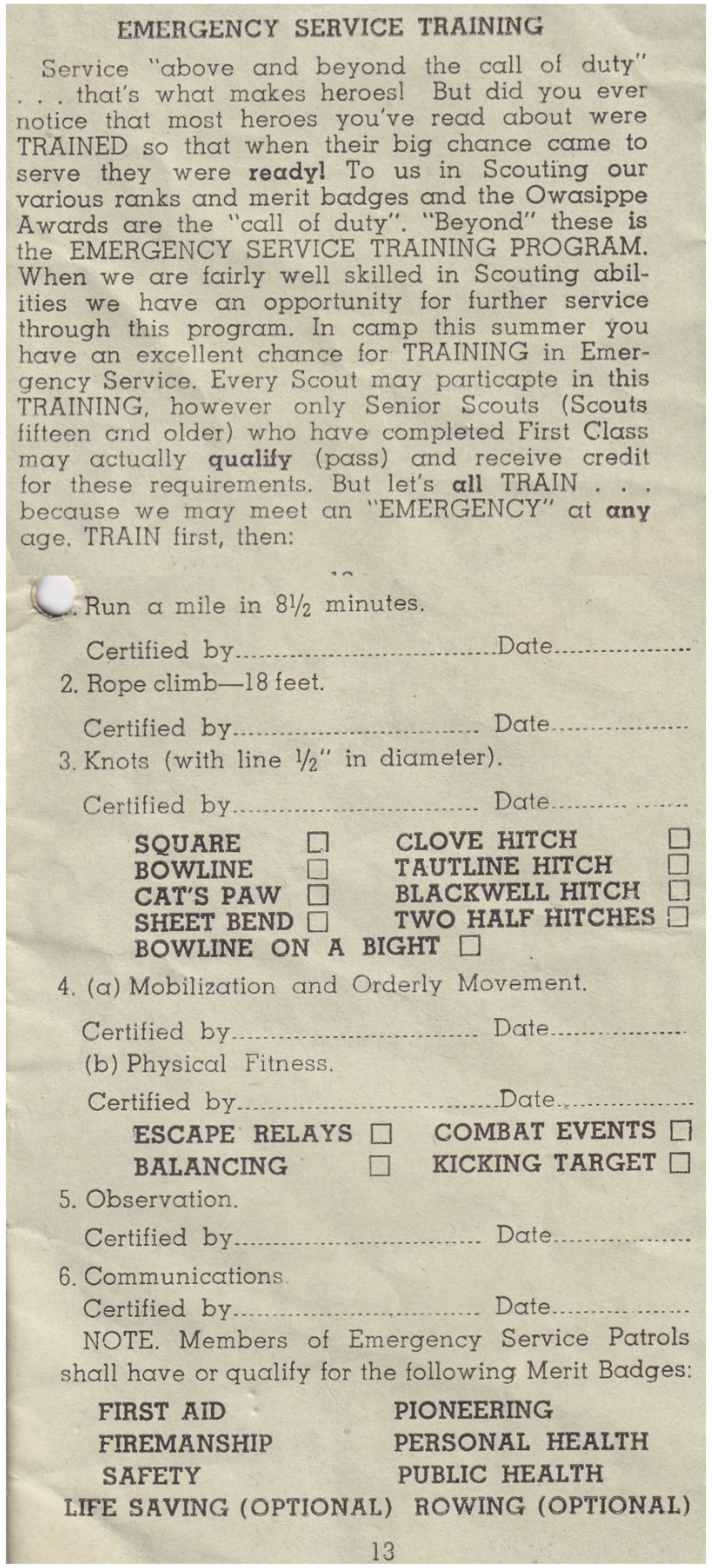
Beginning in 1939, the Boy Scouts of America introduced Emergency Service programs for older Scouts and Explorers to prepare them for assisting in emergencies, particularly during World War II and later for Civil Defense. Participants earned certifications in various skills, with specific insignia marking their qualifications, and units with enough certified members were designated as Emergency Service Units. Each unit was required to have a mobilization plan. Owasippe offered emergency service training during the years of the war.


248 CLUB
BIG BLUE LAKE
CAMPS WILDERNESS & PIONEER
JUNCTION HILL
LOG BRIDGE
BRITTON
CAMPS WILDERNESS & BELNAP
CAMPS HIAWATHA BEACH PIONEER
CAMPS WILDERNESS BLACKHAWK
GERBER RESERVATION MUSKEGON B.S.A.

Top: 1939 map showing Camp Pioneer

Middle: 1943-1948 map showing Camp Belnap

Bottom: 1949 map showing Camp Blackhawk



EMERGENCY SERVICE TRAINING

Service "above and beyond the call of duty" . . . that's what makes heroes! But did you ever notice that most heroes you've read about were TRAINED so that when their big chance came to serve they were **ready!** To us in Scouting our various ranks and merit badges and the Owasippe Awards are the "call of duty". "Beyond" these **is** the EMERGENCY SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM. When we are fairly well skilled in Scouting abilities we have an opportunity for further service through this program. In camp this summer you have an excellent chance for TRAINING in Emergency Service. Every Scout may particapte in this TRAINING, however only Senior Scouts (Scouts fifteen and older) who have completed First Class may actually **qualify** (pass) and receive credit for these requirements. But let's **all** TRAIN . . . because we may meet an "EMERGENCY" at **any** age. TRAIN first, then:

Run a mile in 8½ minutes.
Certified by.................................Date..................

2. Rope climb—18 feet.
Certified by.................................Date..................

3. Knots (with line ½" in diameter).
Certified by.................................Date..................

SQUARE ☐ **CLOVE HITCH** ☐
BOWLINE ☐ **TAUTLINE HITCH** ☐
CAT'S PAW ☐ **BLACKWELL HITCH** ☐
SHEET BEND ☐ **TWO HALF HITCHES** ☐
BOWLINE ON A BIGHT ☐

4. (a) Mobilization and Orderly Movement.
Certified by.................................Date..................
(b) Physical Fitness.
Certified by.................................Date..................

ESCAPE RELAYS ☐ **COMBAT EVENTS** ☐
BALANCING ☐ **KICKING TARGET** ☐

5. Observation.
Certified by.................................Date..................

6. Communications.
Certified by.................................Date..................

NOTE. Members of Emergency Service Patrols shall have or qualify for the following Merit Badges:

FIRST AID **PIONEERING**
FIREMANSHIP **PERSONAL HEALTH**
SAFETY **PUBLIC HEALTH**
LIFE SAVING (OPTIONAL) **ROWING (OPTIONAL)**

13

Above: The Emergency Service Training requirements as shown in the 1942 Owasippe Honor Book

Post-War Reemergence

Return to Normalcy

Even before the end of World War II, the Chicago Council anticipated a large influx of Scouts to close out the 1940s. In 1948 a significant amount of money was invested in renovating Owasippe and purchasing new land. $250,000 was allocated for camp improvements, and Camp Blackhawk was renovated.

In 1949, Camp Blackhawk re-opened for the second time and retained its original name. However, the name Pioneer did not disappear. That year, Council opened a new lone troop camp on the north side of Big Blue Lake and gave it the name Camp Pioneer.

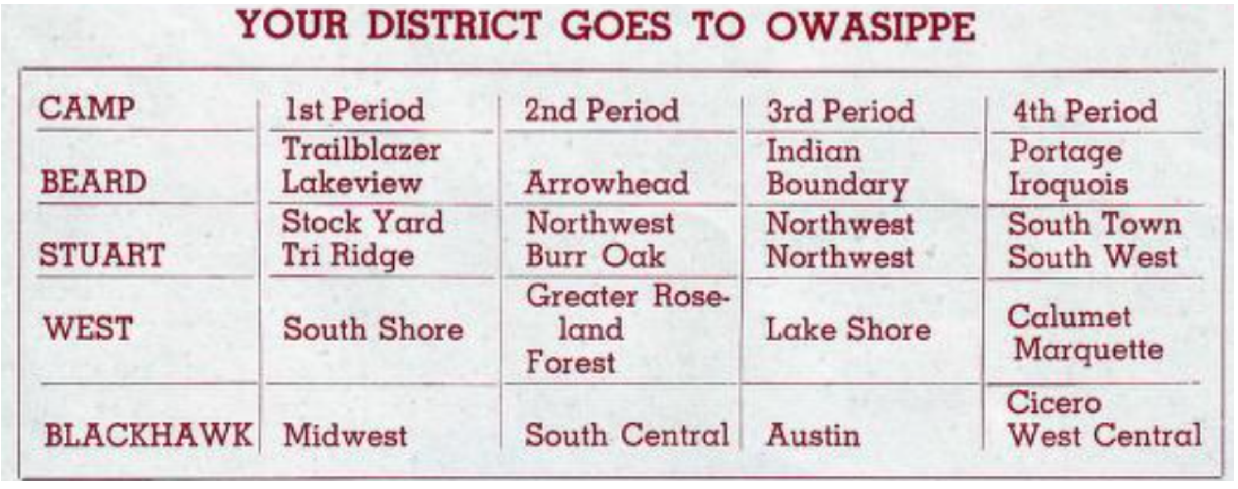
The districts also changed in 1949. Chicago went from six large districts in 1948 to twenty-four small districts in 1949. Many prominent leaders had pushed for the end of district-based camping since the 1920s, but this wasn't realized until 1949. Even though the Council claimed that district-based camping was over, that wasn't entirely the case. It is more accurate to say that district-exclusive camping had ended.

Previously, when a district occupied a camp, the senior staff—came from that same district. If another district used the camp later in the summer, a completely new staff would replace the original one. Starting in 1949, this model changed. The 1949, 1950, and 1952 camp promotion brochures continued to list which districts were assigned to which camps.

Top:1949

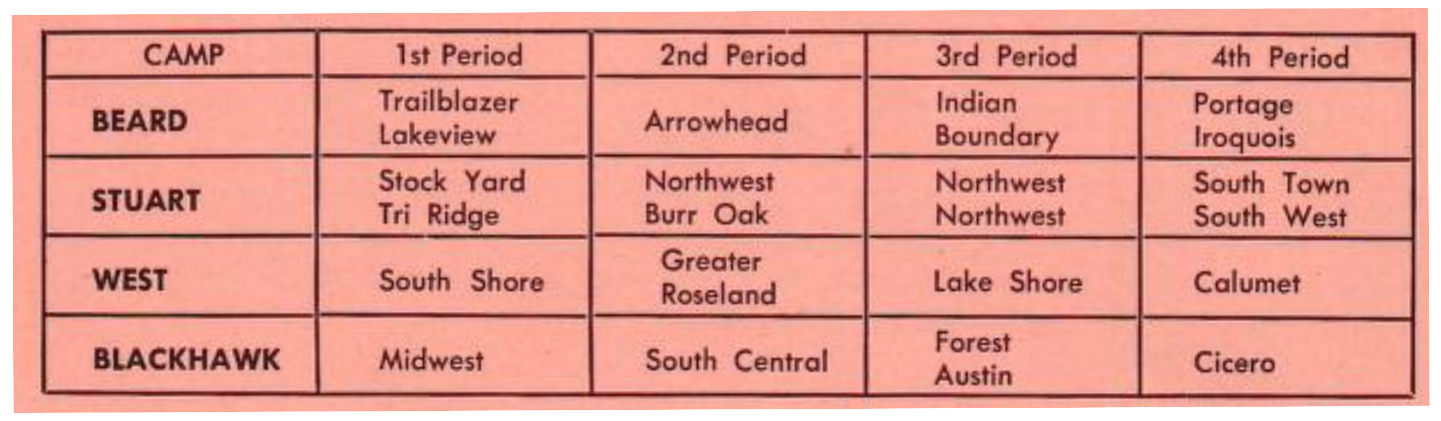
Middle: 1950

Bottom: 1952

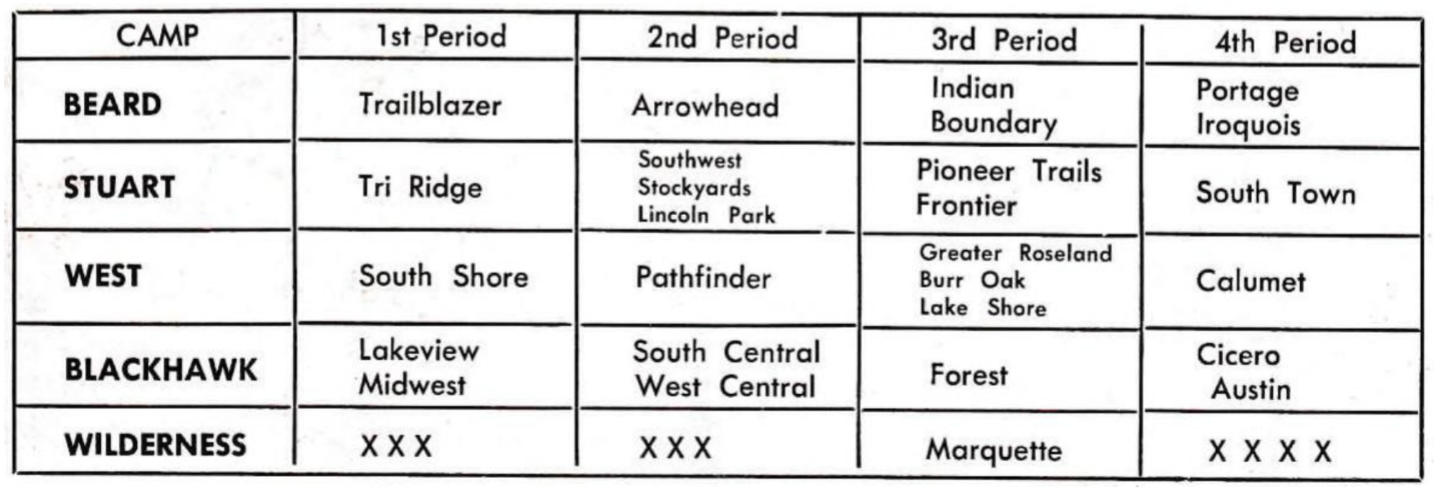


YOUR DISTRICT GOES TO OWASIPPE

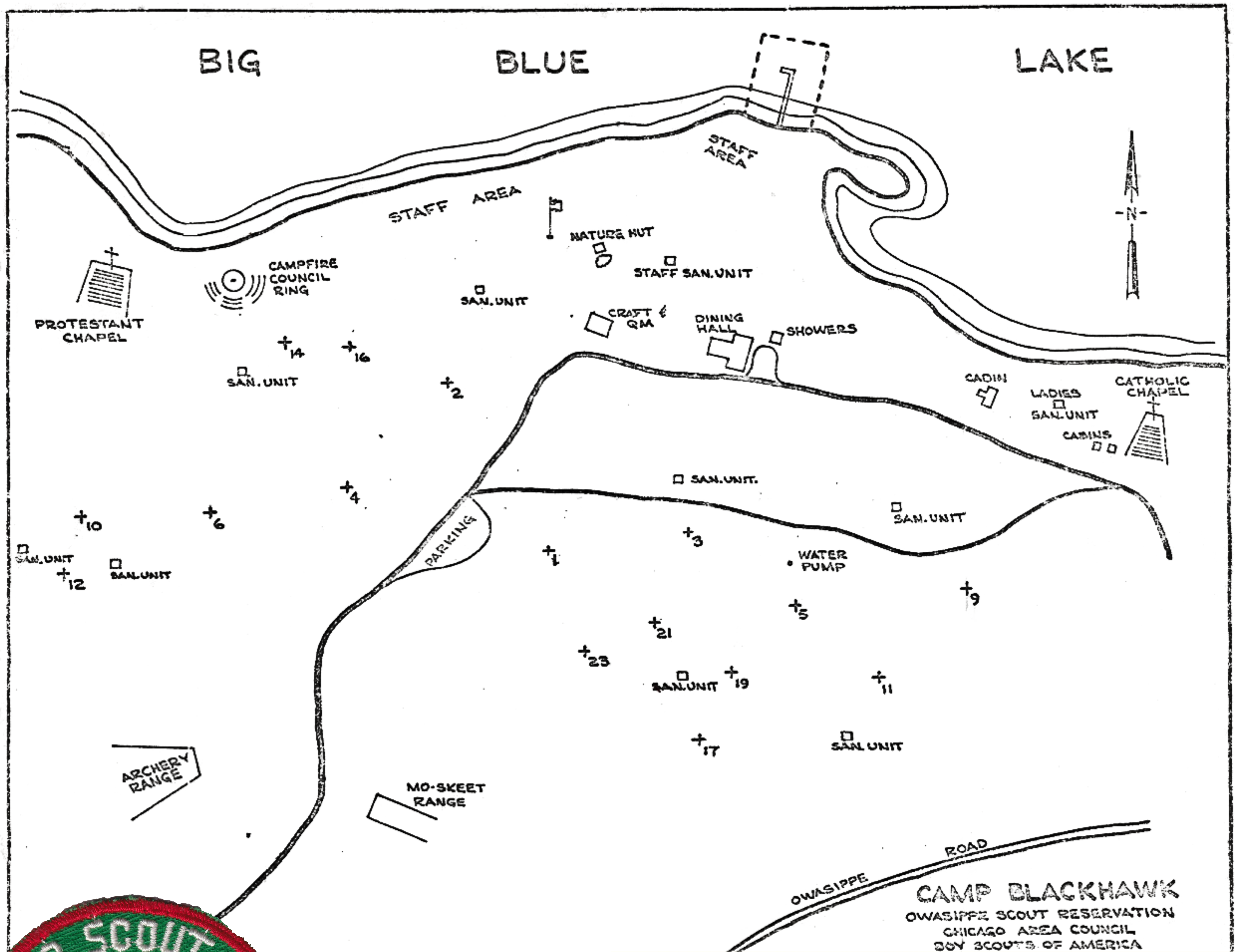
CAMP	1st Period	2nd Period	3rd Period	4th Period
BEARD	Trailblazer Lakeview	Arrowhead	Indian Boundary	Portage Iroquois
STUART	Stock Yard Tri Ridge	Northwest Burr Oak	Northwest Northwest	South Town South West
WEST	South Shore	Greater Roseland Forest	Lake Shore	Calumet Marquette
BLACKHAWK	Midwest	South Central	Austin	Cicero West Central



CAMP	1st Period	2nd Period	3rd Period	4th Period
BEARD	Trailblazer Lakeview	Arrowhead	Indian Boundary	Portage Iroquois
STUART	Stock Yard Tri Ridge	Northwest Burr Oak	Northwest Northwest	South Town South West
WEST	South Shore	Greater Roseland	Lake Shore	Calumet
BLACKHAWK	Midwest	South Central	Forest Austin	Cicero



CAMP	1st Period	2nd Period	3rd Period	4th Period
BEARD	Trailblazer	Arrowhead	Indian Boundary	Portage Iroquois
STUART	Tri Ridge	Southwest Stockyards Lincoln Park	Pioneer Trails Frontier	South Town
WEST	South Shore	Pathfinder	Greater Roseland Burr Oak Lake Shore	Calumet
BLACKHAWK	Lakeview Midwest	South Central West Central	Forest	Cicero Austin
WILDERNESS	X X X	X X X	Marquette	X X X X

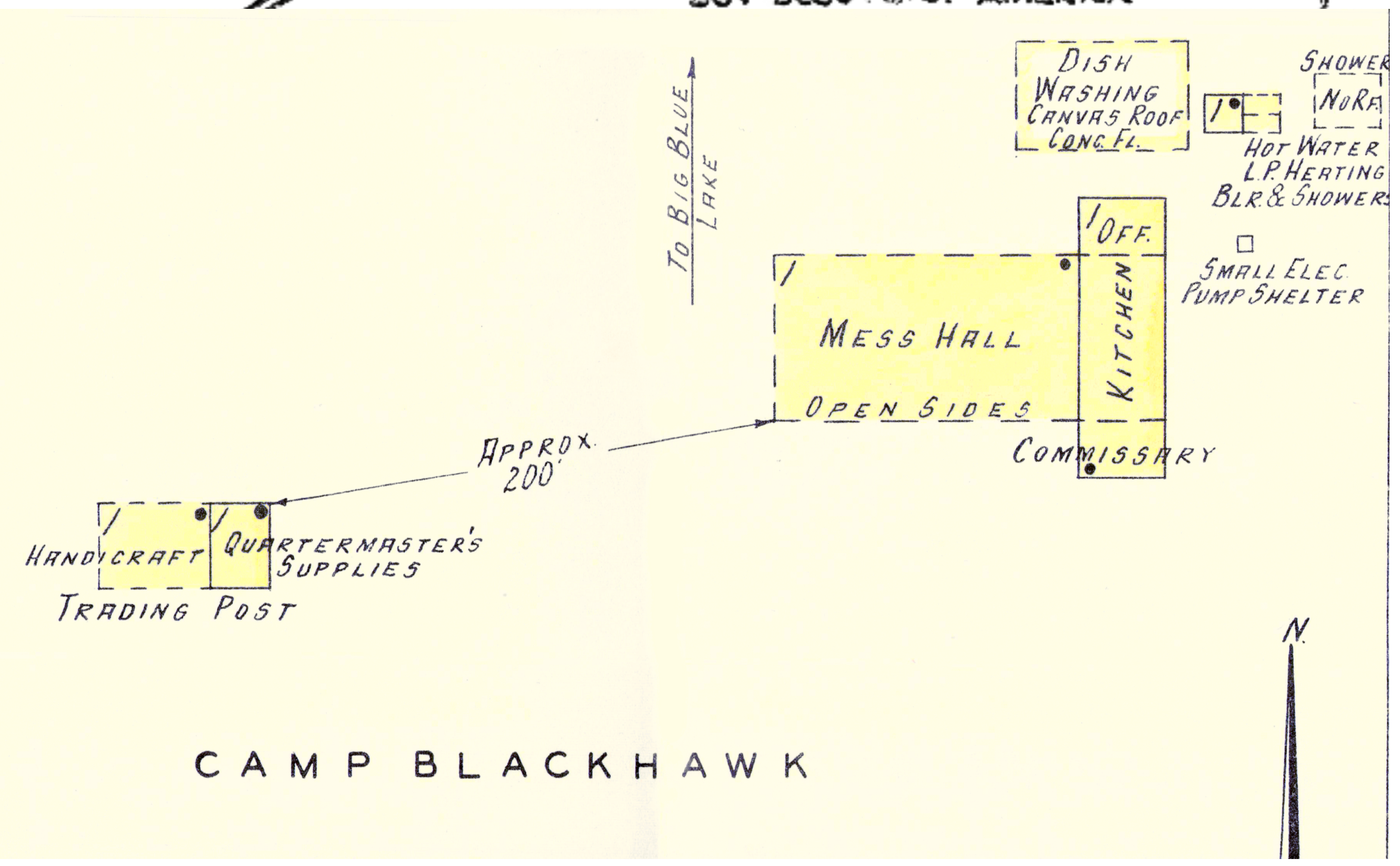

BIG BLUE LAKE
STAFF AREA
STAFF AREA
N
PROTESTANT CHAPEL
CAMPFIRE COUNCIL RING
NATURE HUT
STAFF SAN. UNIT
SAN. UNIT
CRAFT & QM
DINING HALL
SHOWERS
SAN. UNIT
14
16
2
CABIN
LADIES SAN. UNIT
CATHOLIC CHAPEL
CABINS
SAN. UNIT.
SAN. UNIT
4
10
6
PARKING
1
3
WATER PUMP
SAN. UNIT
SAN. UNIT
12
SAN. UNIT
5
9
21
23
SAN. UNIT
19
11
17
SAN. UNIT
ARCHERY RANGE
MO-SKEET RANGE
OWASIPPE ROAD
CAMP BLACKHAWK
OWASIPPE SCOUT RESERVATION
CHICAGO AREA COUNCIL
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
67D-28-1

CHICAGO SCOUT CAMPS
OWASIPPE
BLACKHAWK

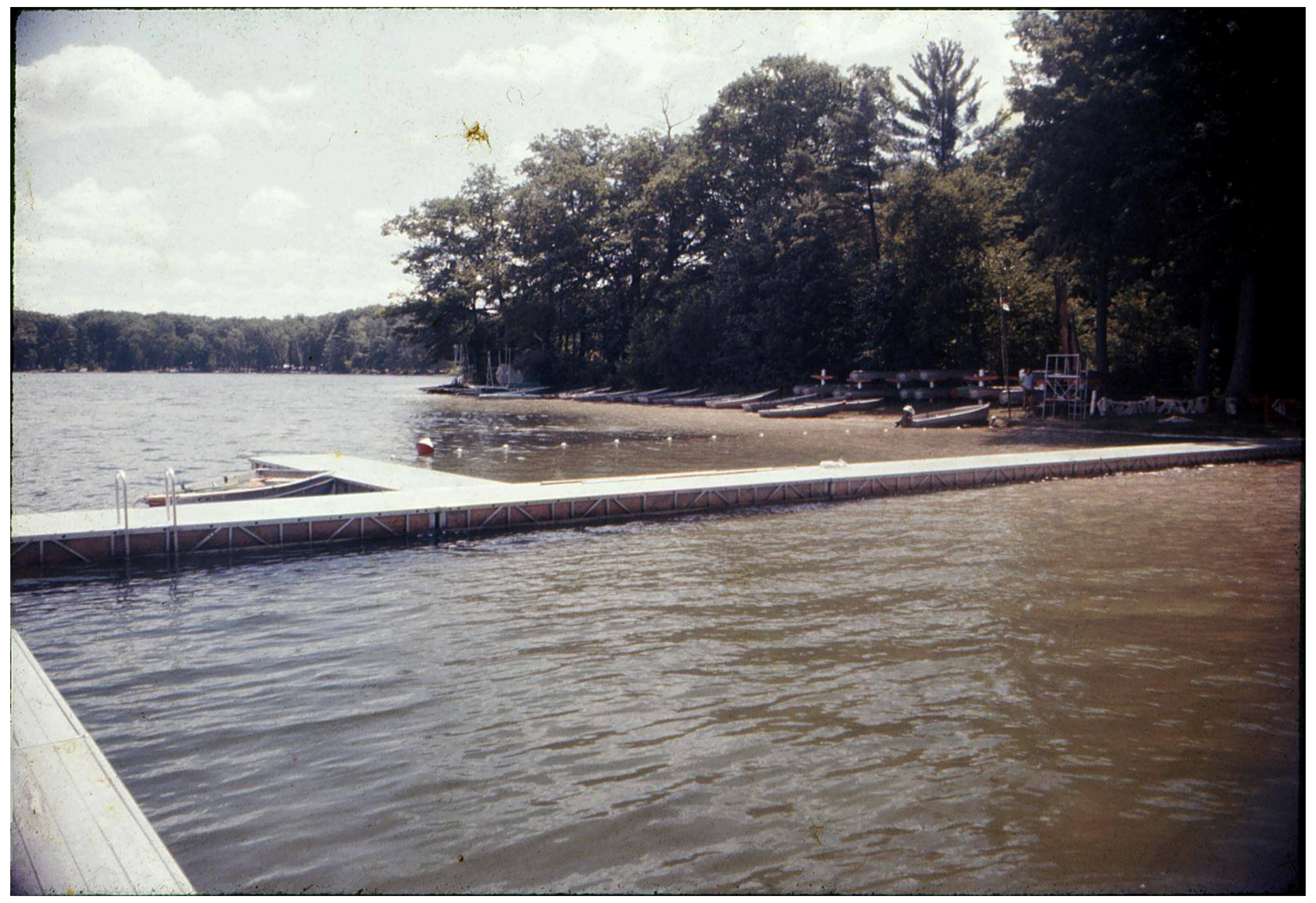
Above: 1967 map of Blackhawk

Left: Staff patch with Blackhawk segment

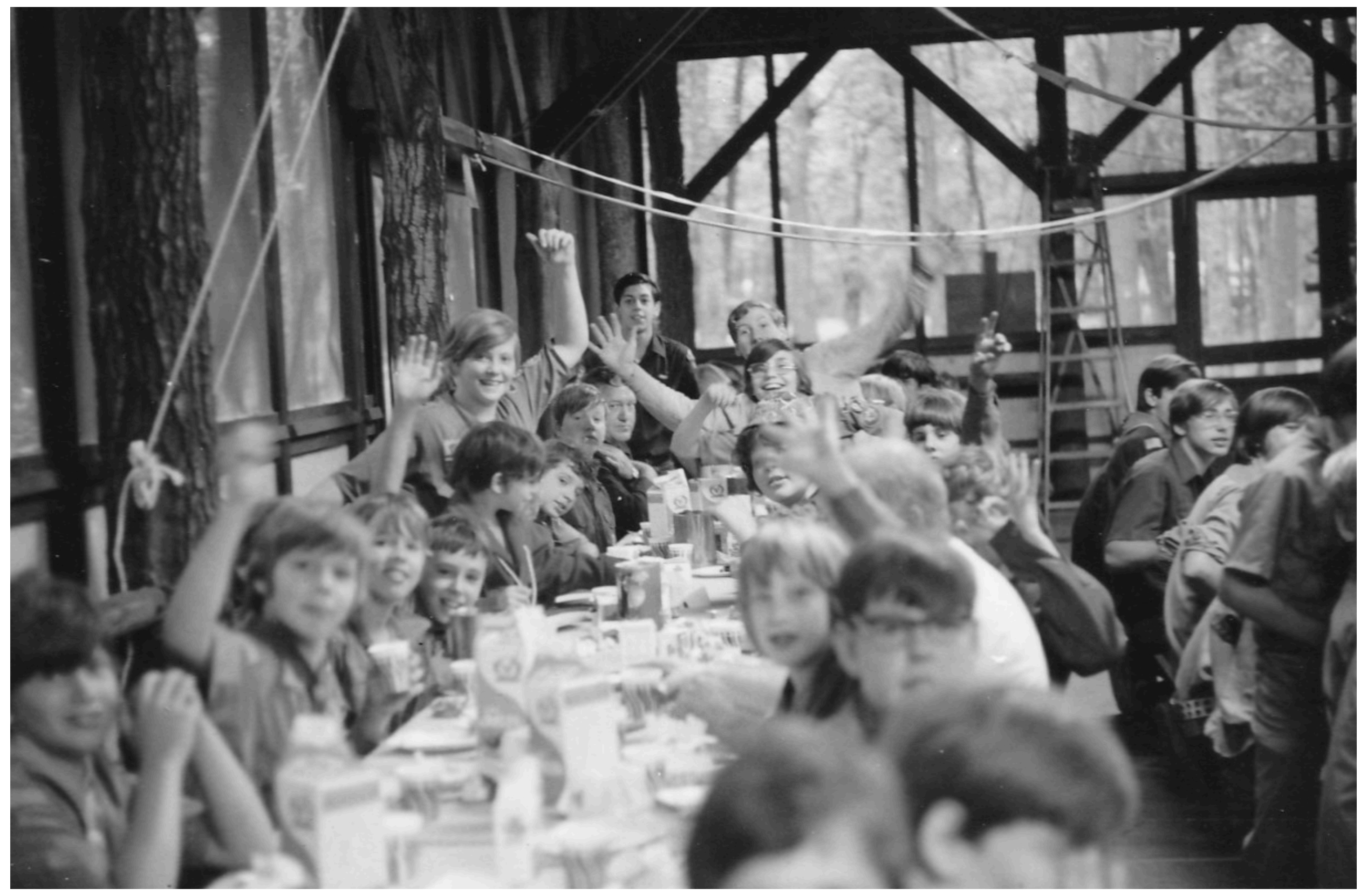
Right: 1953 facility map of Blackhawk


TO BIG BLUE LAKE
DISH WASHING CANVAS ROOF CONC. FL.
SHOWER
NO R.F.
HOT WATER L.P. HEATING BLR. & SHOWERS
OFF.
SMALL ELEC. PUMP SHELTER
MESS HALL
OPEN SIDES
KITCHEN
COMMISSARY
APPROX. 200'
HANDICRAFT
QUARTERMASTER'S SUPPLIES
TRADING POST
N.
CAMP BLACKHAWK

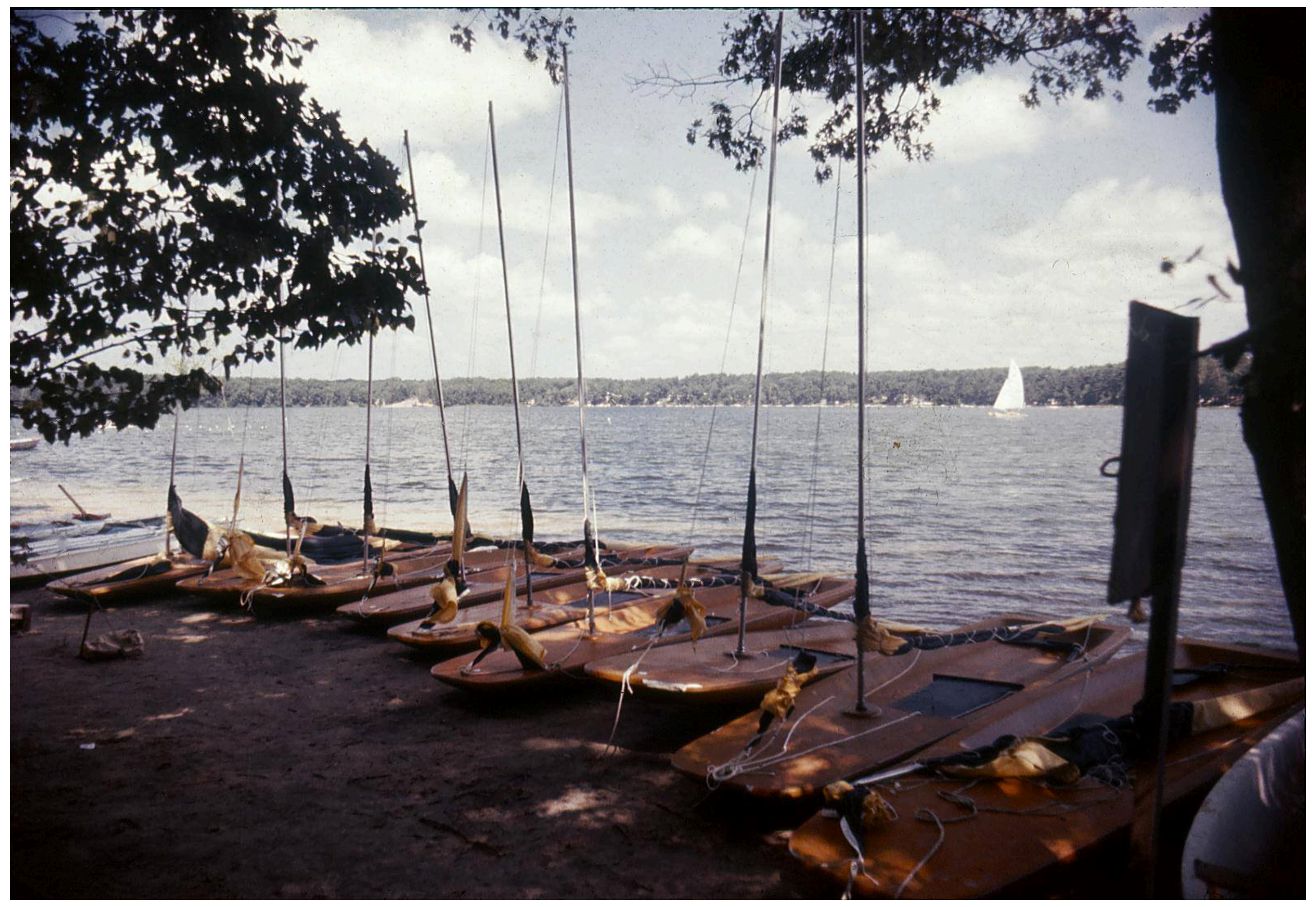
Views from the 50's & 70's



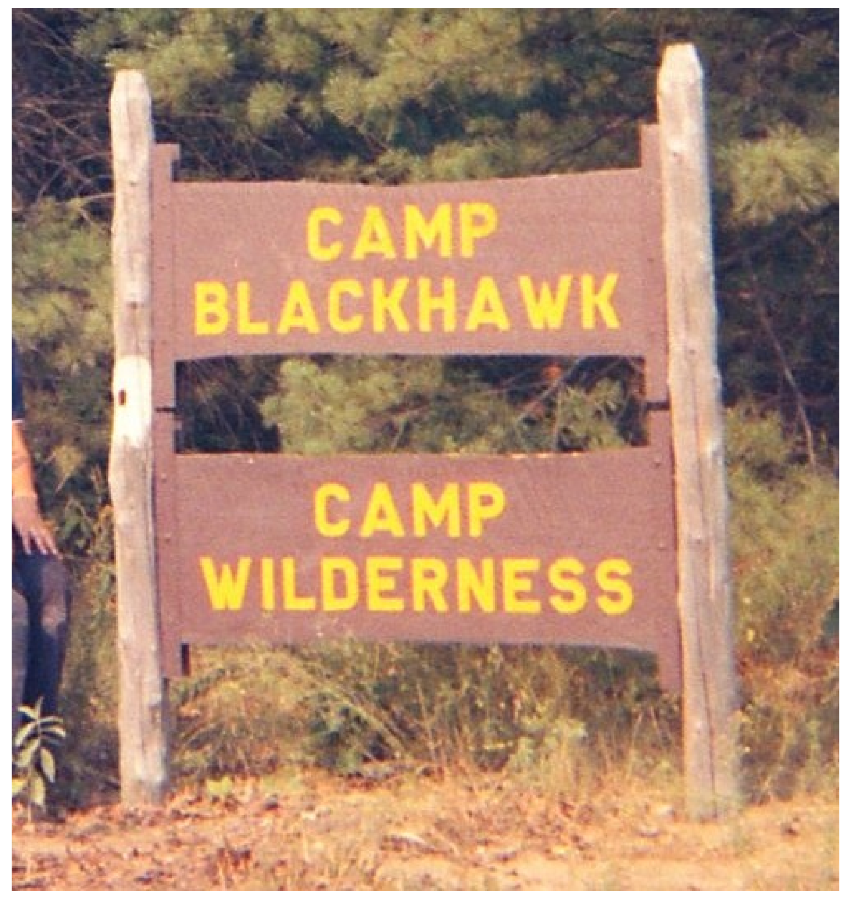
Above: 1973 Blackhawk Waterfront



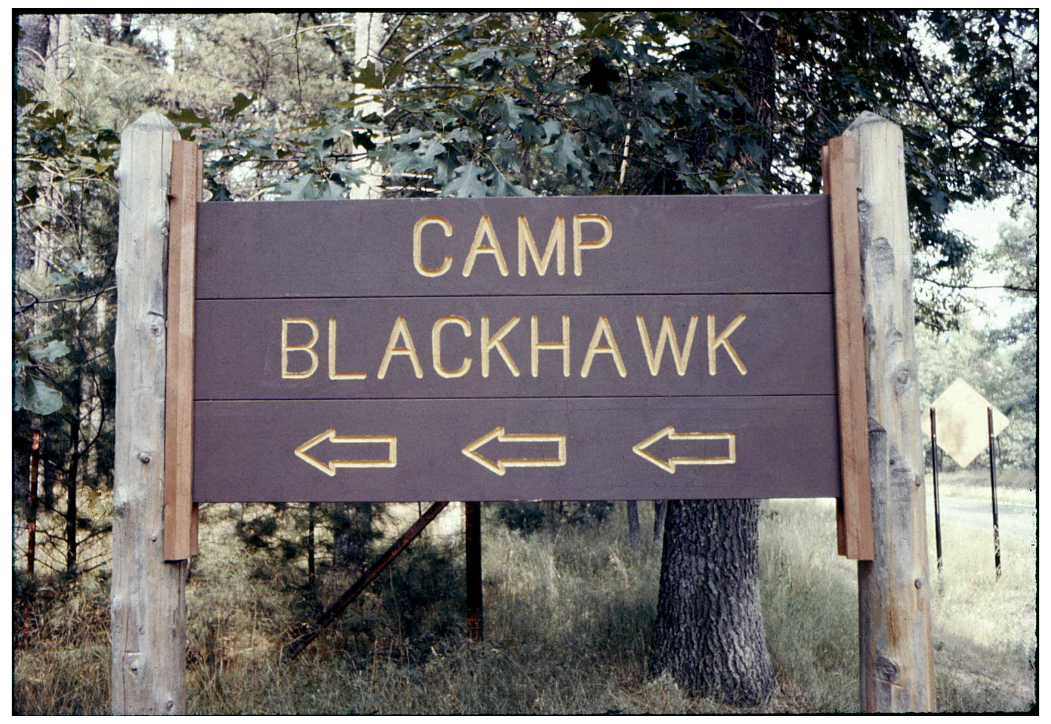
Above: 1973 Stern Lodge Interior



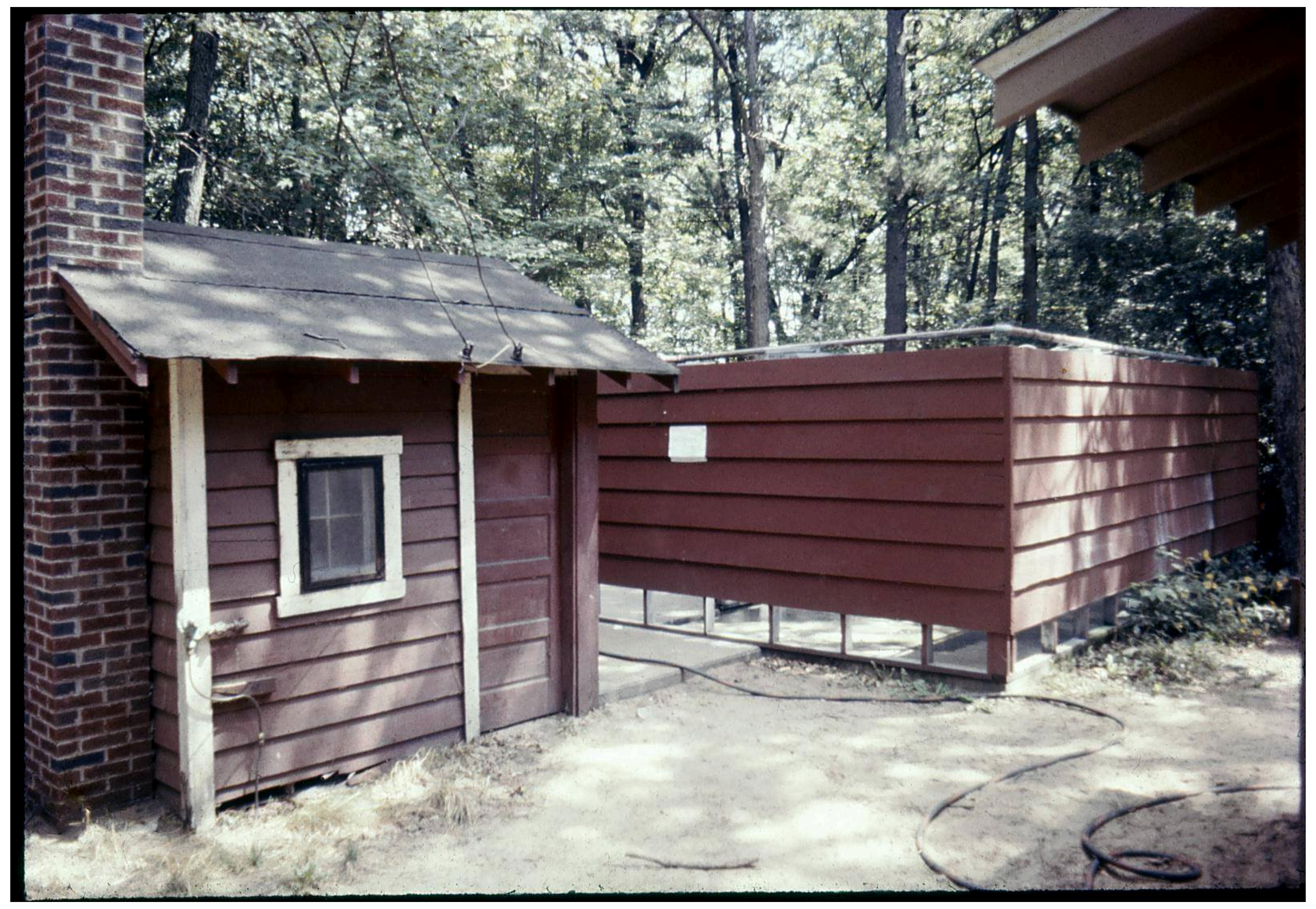
Above: 1973 Blackhawk Sailbase


CAMP
BLACKHAWK
CAMP
WILDERNESS

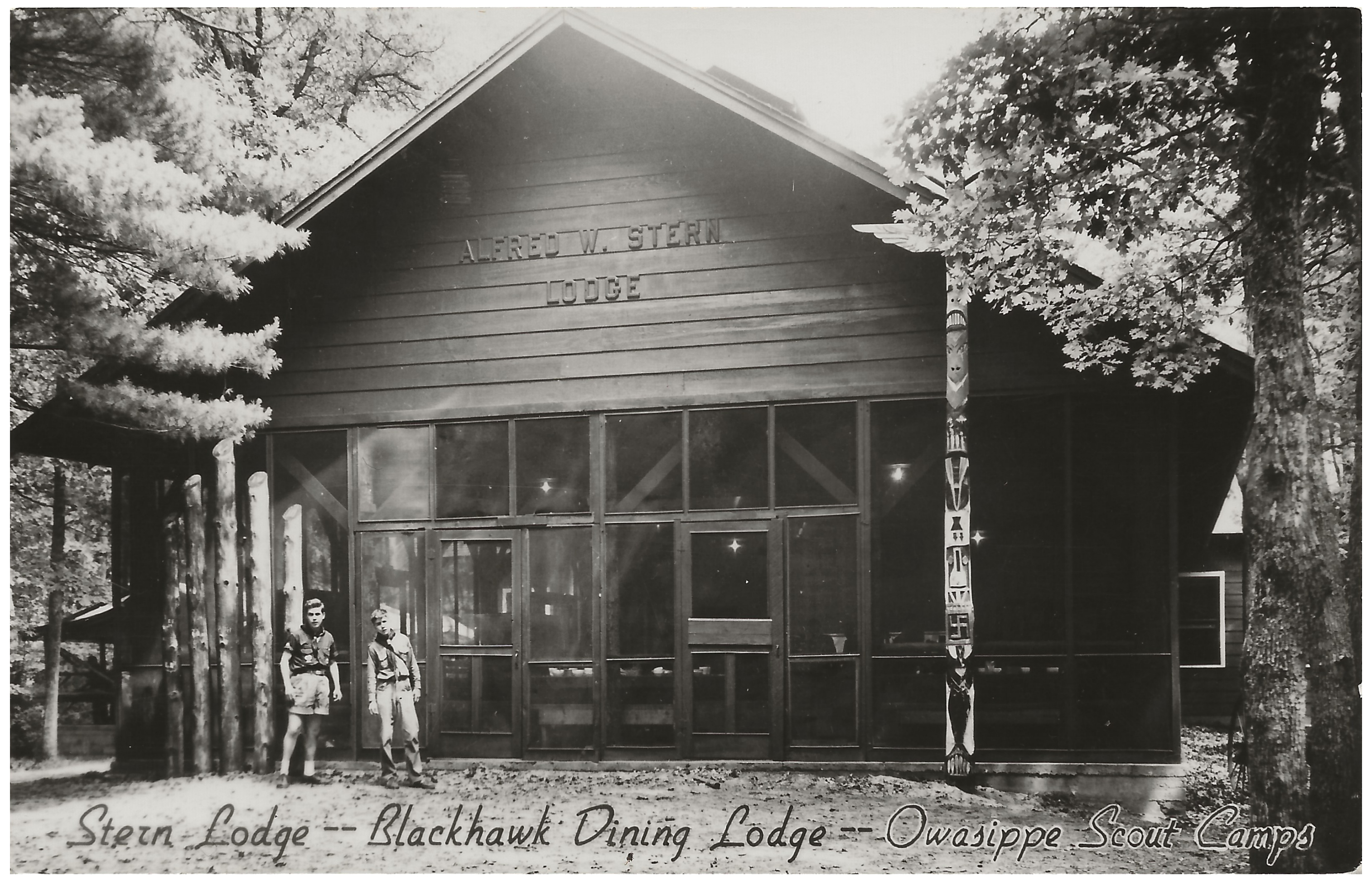
Left 1969 Blackhawk Sign
Right: 1973 Blackhawk Sign


CAMP
BLACKHAWK
⇦ ⇦ ⇦

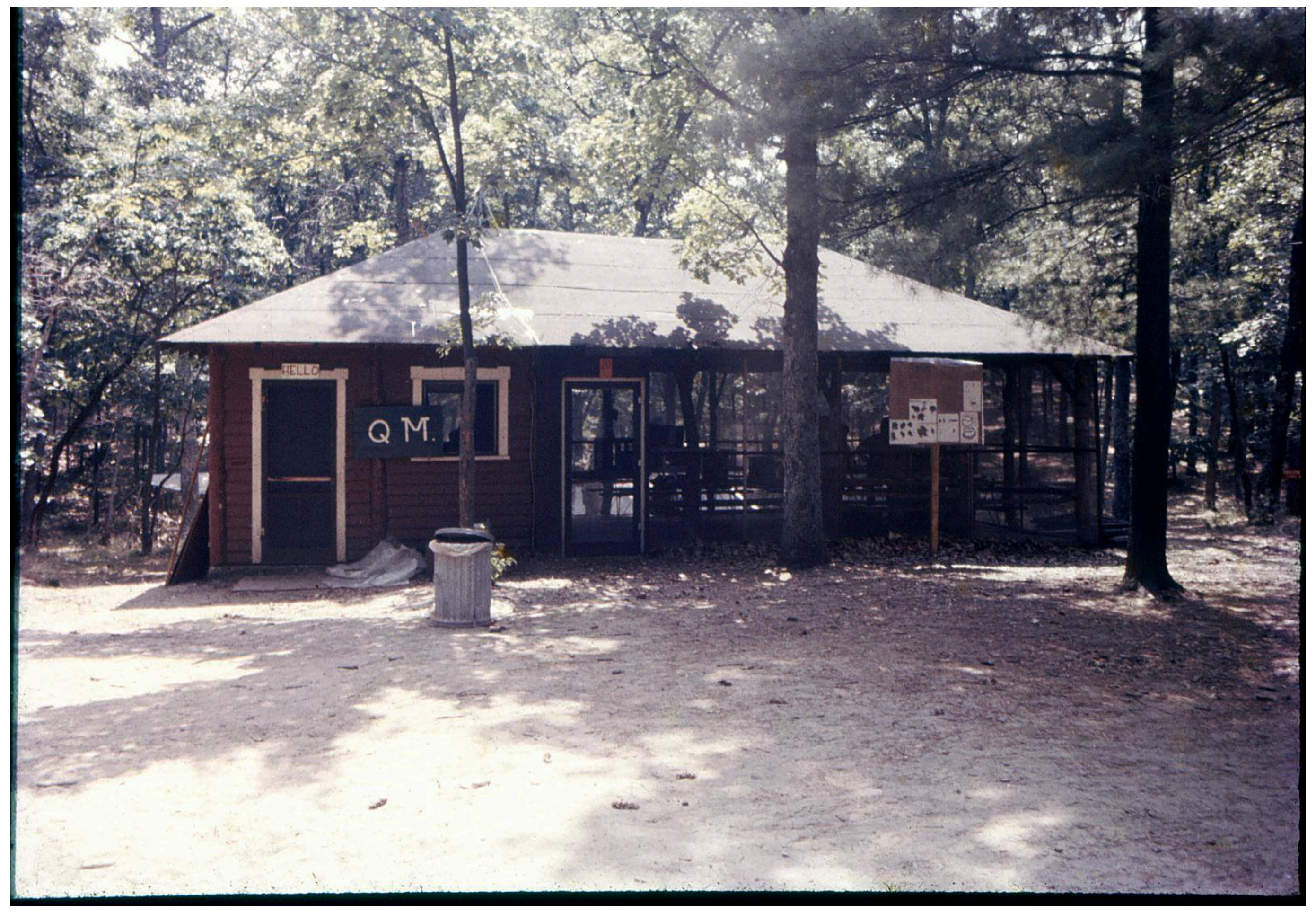
Below: 1973 Blackhawk Shower



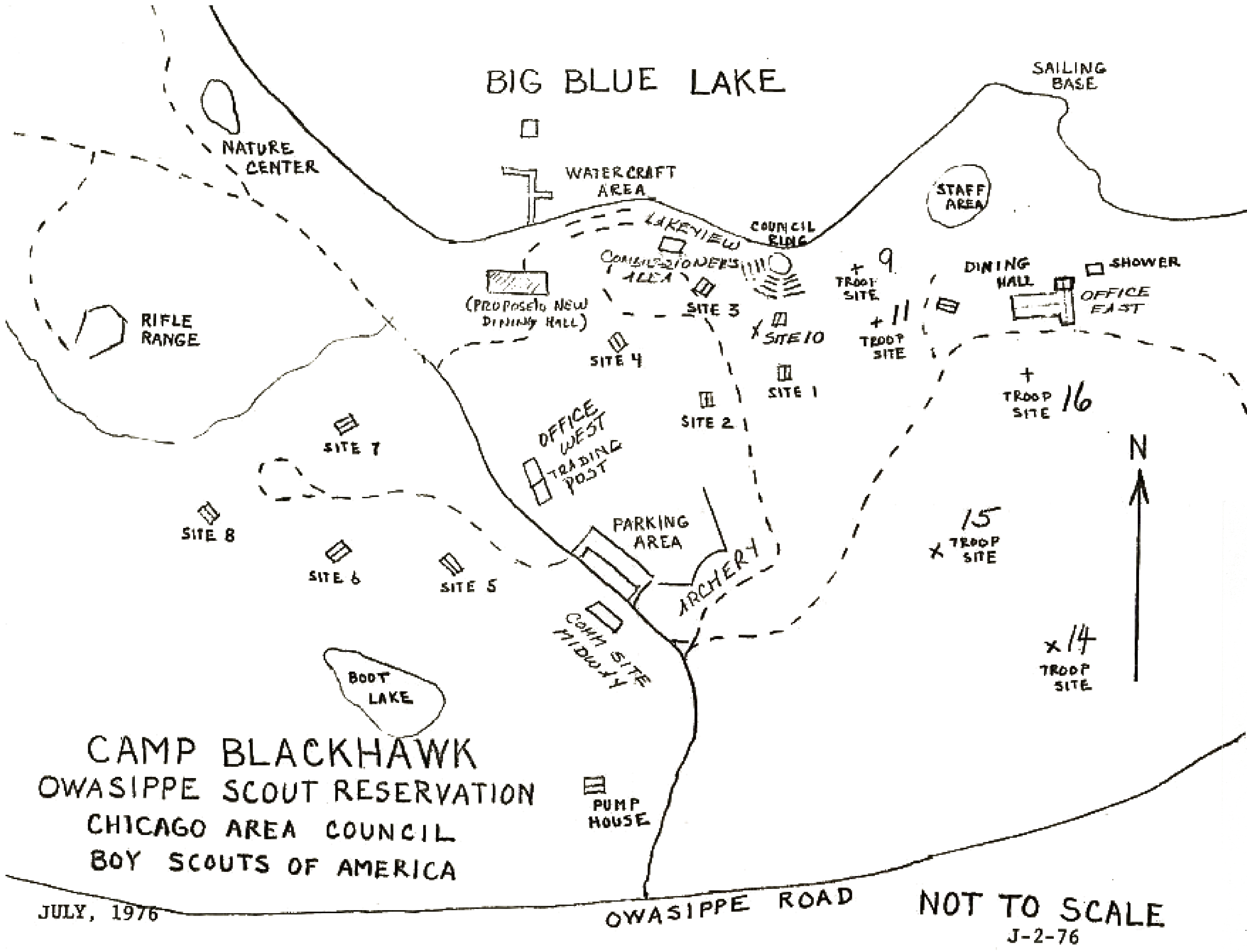
Below: 1950 Stern Lodge by Bervin Johnson


ALFRED W. STERN
LODGE
Stern Lodge -- Blackhawk Dining Lodge -- Owasippe Scout Camps

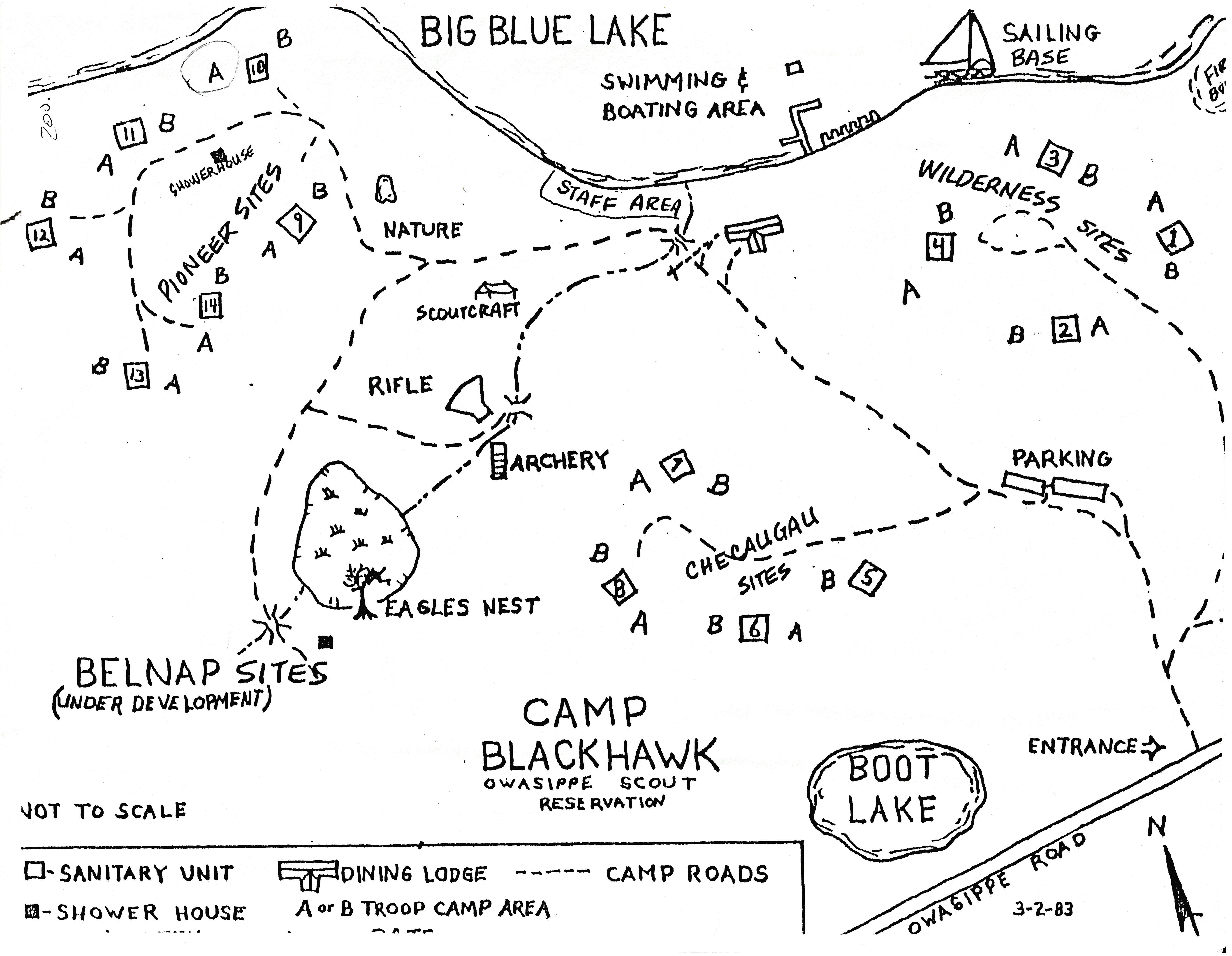
Below: 1973 Blackhawk Quartermaster and Nature Area



Moving Sites


BIG BLUE LAKE
SAILING BASE
NATURE CENTER
WATERCRAFT AREA
STAFF AREA
LAKEVIEW
COUNCIL RING
COMMISSIONERS AREA
(PROPOSED NEW DINING HALL)
+ 9 TROOP SITE
DINING HALL
SHOWER
OFFICE EAST
RIFLE RANGE
SITE 3
SITE 10
+ 11 TROOP SITE
SITE 4
SITE 1
+ TROOP SITE 16
SITE 2
OFFICE WEST
TRADING POST
SITE 7
N
SITE 8
PARKING AREA
15 TROOP SITE
SITE 6
SITE 5
ARCHERY
COMM SITE MIDWAY
x 14 TROOP SITE
BOOT LAKE
CAMP BLACKHAWK
OWASIPPE SCOUT RESERVATION
CHICAGO AREA COUNCIL
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
PUMP HOUSE
JULY, 1976
OWASIPPE ROAD
NOT TO SCALE
J-2-76

Below: 1983 map which shows post-transitioned Blackhawk. Notice that there was a proposed fourth 'hill' named after Camp Belnap.


BIG BLUE LAKE
SAILING BASE
SWIMMING & BOATING AREA
A 10 B
11 B
A
B
12
A
SHOWERHOUSE
PIONEER SITES
9
B
A
B
14
A
B 13 A
NATURE
STAFF AREA
A 3 B
WILDERNESS SITES
A
2
B
B
4
A
B 2 A
SCOUTCRAFT
RIFLE
ARCHERY
A 7 B
PARKING
CHECAUGAU SITES
B
8
A
B 5
B 6 A
EAGLES NEST
BELNAP SITES (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)
CAMP BLACKHAWK
OWASIPPE SCOUT RESERVATION
ENTRANCE
BOOT LAKE
NOT TO SCALE
N
OWASIPPE ROAD
3-2-83
☐-SANITARY UNIT
▣-SHOWER HOUSE
DINING LODGE
----- CAMP ROADS
A or B TROOP CAMP AREA

Above: 1976 map which shows the transition between 'old' Blackhawk and 'new' Blackhawk. The new dining hall would not be constructed until 1980.

Planning a ‘New’ Blackhawk

Nº 15 TROOP SITE
Nº 13 TROOP SITE
BIG BLUE LAKE
Nº 14 TROOP SITE
Nº 16 TROOP SITE
COMMISIONER'S SHELTER
STAFF
BOATING & CANOEING
SWIMMING
SAILBOAT BASIN
VESPER AREA
ARCHERY
RIFLE RANGE
Nº 12 TROOP SITE
Nº 11 TROOP SITE
COMMISIONER'S SHELTER
CENTRAL LODGE
Nº 3 TROOP SITE
Nº 4 TROOP SITE
Nº 2 TROOP SITE
Nº 1 TROOP SITE
LONE TROOP SITE
22 SHOTGUN RANGE
COMMISIONER'S SHELTER
Nº 7 TROOP SITE
Nº 8 TROOP SITE
ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
PARKING
Nº 10 TROOP SITE
Nº 6 TROOP SITE
Nº 5 TROOP SITE
LONE TROOP SITE
COMMISIONER'S SHELTER
GATE
COMMISIONER'S SHELTER
COUNCIL RING
Nº 9 TROOP SITE
WELL
CENTRAL WATER SUPPLY
BOOT LAKE
RANGER
GATE
BRITTON LAKE
CREEK ROAD
OWASIPPI ROAD

This is a portion of the 1973 planning map for the proposed new site of Camp Blackhawk. Notice the firebowl was to be removed from the waterfront. The firebowl was almost moved to Boot Lake, though this idea was eventually scrapped.

A ‘New’ Blackhawk

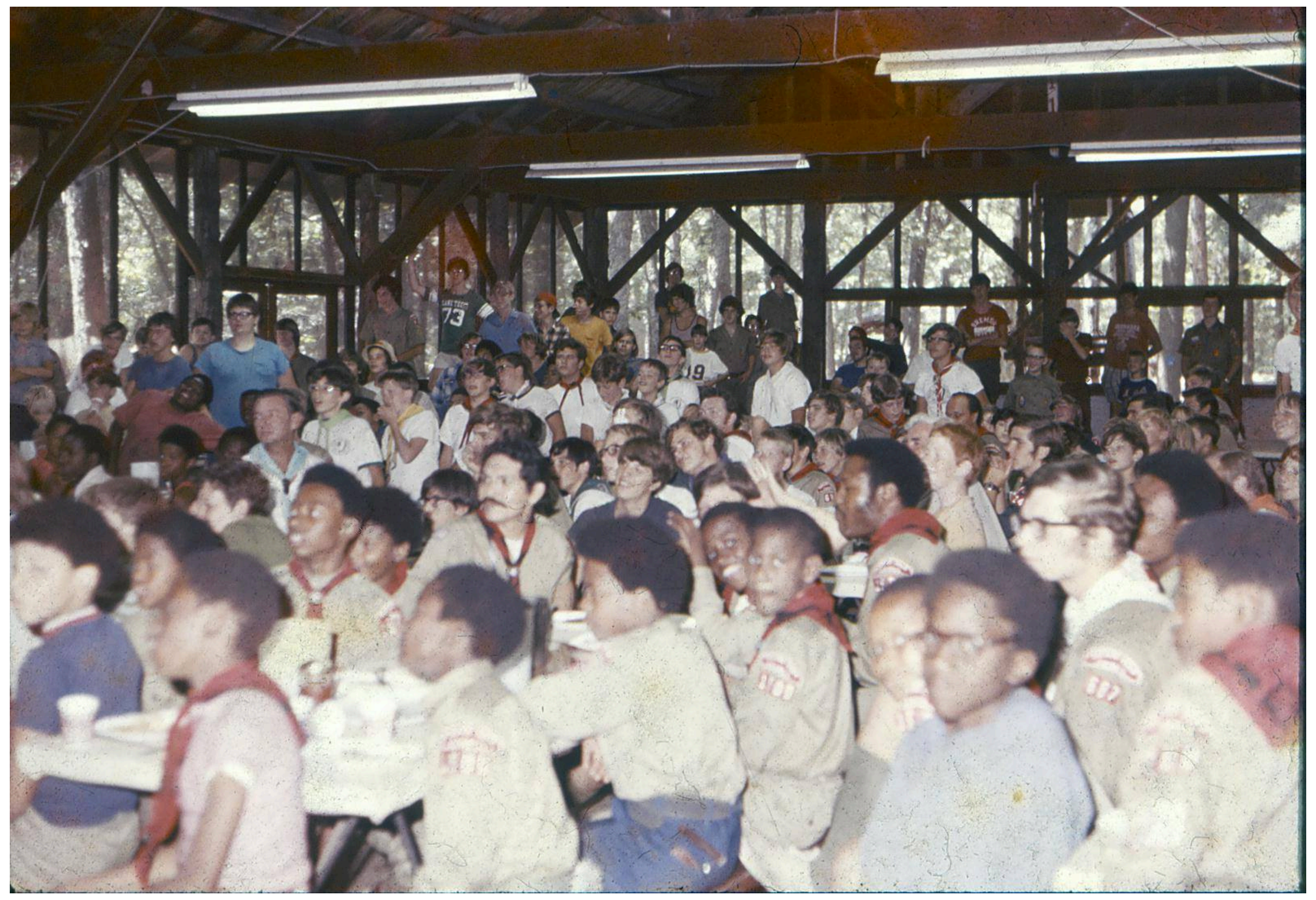
A 12-Month Camp

In 1973, it was announced that Camp Blackhawk would be rebuilt as a “12-month camp” as part of a broader effort to transition Owasippe into a year-round facility. This change in policy was attributed to the Chicago Public Schools’ experimentation of a year-round academic calendar that same year.

Throughout the country, many school districts adopted a “45-15” schedule, in which students were divided into four groups that rotated attendance—45 days in school followed by 15 school days off—ensuring only three-fourths of the student population was present at any given time. This model helped ease overcrowding and addressed concerns about students forgetting material over the long summer break (summer slide). Chicago Public Schools began implementing the “45-15” calendar at three overcrowded schools in 1971, expanding the program each year. This trend possibly alarmed the Chicago Area Council, as Owasippe operated only for a limited number of weeks each summer. Coordinating programming for both staggered schedules and traditional calendars would have posed a major logistical challenge. Fortunately for Owasippe, the year-round model failed to gain lasting popularity in Chicago—possibly due to the city’s ability, through the Public Building Commission, to build new schools faster than other districts, easing the overcrowding that made “45-15” necessary elsewhere.

While the official reasoning focused on year-round use, other factors may have had a greater contributed to the decision to rebuild rather than renovate. Camp Blackhawk was approaching its 50th anniversary, and its infrastructure was showing its age. The Alfred W. Stern Lodge, built in the 1920s, had served as the camp’s dining hall for decades. As attendance increased, the 62’ x 20’ space that was built to serve 100 Scouts a week often had to accommodate more than 300 Scouts. (The foundation of the old dining hall can serve as a visual of how tightly packed the building once was.)

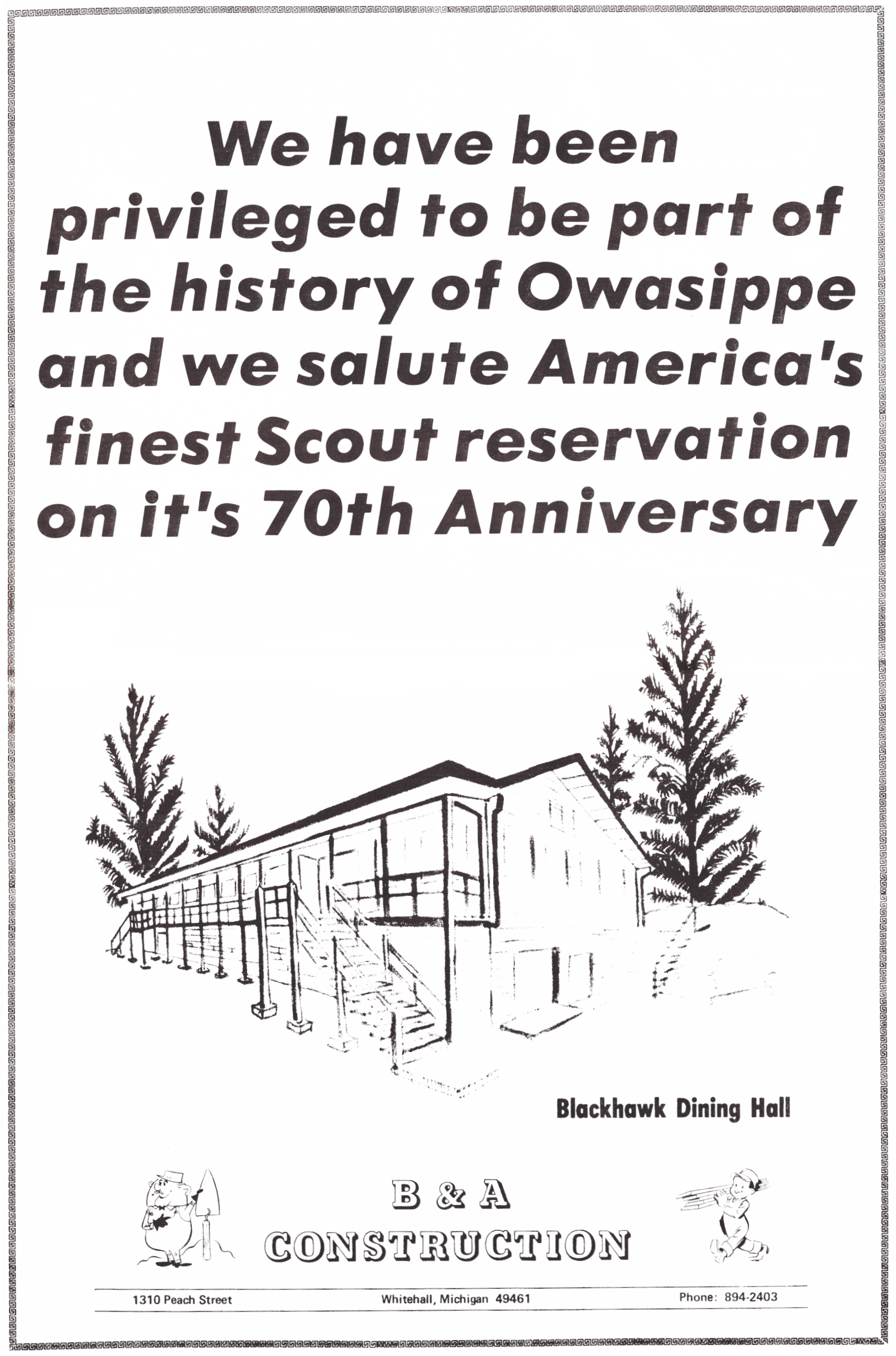
In addition to overcrowding, the facilities were outdated. The continued use of pit toilets highlighted the need for modernization. Rather than invest in renovating the aging structures, the Chicago Council chose to relocate Camp Blackhawk about 100 yards west of its original site. As in 1937, this move displaced Camp Wilderness, dismantling the lone-troop camp’s infrastructure once again.



Above: 1970’s Stern Lodge stuffed with Scouts

Building Blackhawk

The construction was divided into three phases. Phase One, completed in 1974, focused on basic infrastructure, including roads, sanitary units (KYBOs), and shower facilities. Phase Two called for a two-story dining hall—with dorms and showers for 100 on the lower floor and a dining space for 400 above—along with a new administration building and sports field. Although Phase Two was expected to be completed by 1975, plans were altered and construction was not finished until 1981. Phase Three, scheduled for completion by 1977, included plans for a chapel and boating facilities, but the chapel was never built and the boating facilities were never built as originally planned.

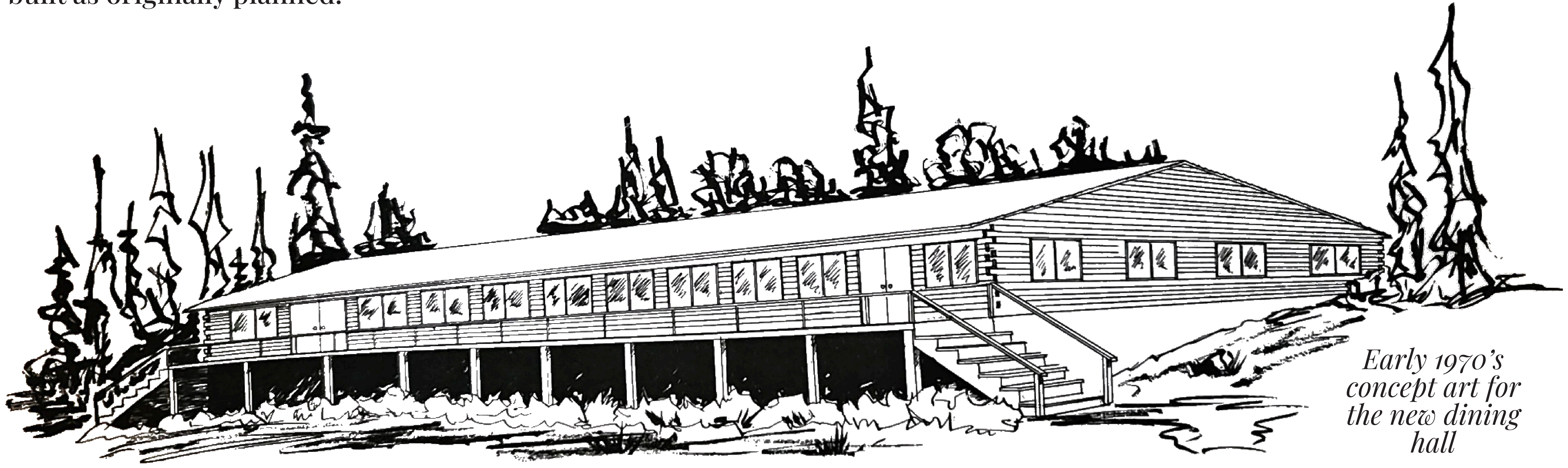


We have been privileged to be part of the history of Owasippe and we salute America's finest Scout reservation on it's 70th Anniversary

Blackhawk Dining Hall

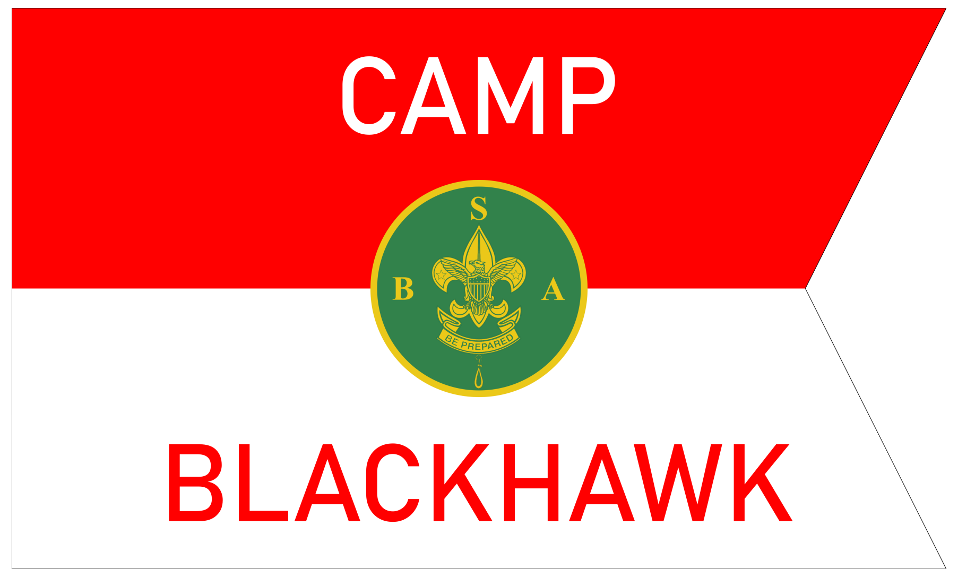
B & A CONSTRUCTION

1310 Peach Street Whitehall, Michigan 49461 Phone: 894-2403



Early 1970’s concept art for the new dining hall

Songs & Stories



1920's Blackhawk Guidon

Camp Blackhawk Song (1920's)

Tune: "Artillery Song" Key: D

Over hill, over dale, as we hit the camping trail,and our buddies are hiking along.
In and out hear them shout, gee!
I'm glad that I'm a Scout,
As we're singing that old camping song.
That it's HI-Hi-He, Camp Blackhawk for me, shout out that name loud and strong, Blackhawk,
Where'er you go, you will always know,
That a true Scout will always come back to Camp Blackhawk,
Yes a true Scout will always come back.

Camp Blackhawk Song (Same as Belnap song) (1950's)

Tune: "Sweet Chewalka"

Dear old Blackhawk
By the sleepy water
Take this weary Scouter over to you
Dear old Blackhawk,
How I love to be there
How I love to see here friends old and new.
Night shades calling moonbeams falling over the water
tomtom's beating bringing golden memories.
Dear old Blackhawk
By the sleepy water
Take this weary Scouter over to you.

Fun Fact

Did you know that the "hills" where each set of troop campsites are located are named after the old Big Blue Lake camps? Some mistakenly believe these hills are in the same locations as the original camps, but the names are just a nod to our history.

Snow's Trail and Mounds - 1930 Owasippe its Yarns and Legends - George Mozealous

Location - South of Big Blue Lake

There are many old lumbering trails throughout the entire White River region which were used primarily to haul logs to the various roll-a ways. Generally speaking, these roads wind from tree to tree and keep as far as possible in the low land in order to avoid the necessity of hauling the trees over ridges.

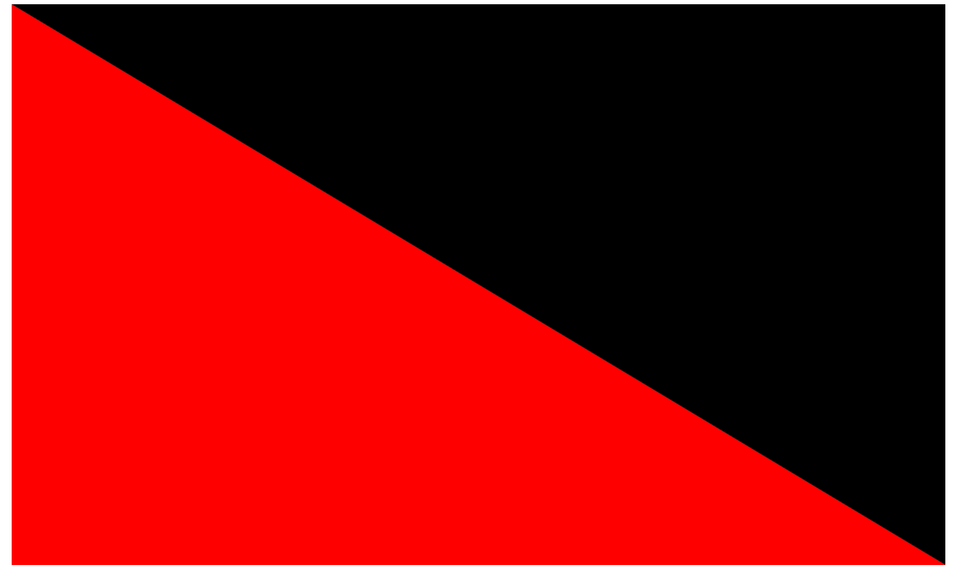
One such trail was built by Don Snow along the South Side of Blue Lake to Cleveland Creek. This trail, which has not been used since about 1890 is known as Snow's Trail and much of it had been cleared out as a hiking trail by the Scouts.

When the trail was built, there was discovered a series of mounds that were evidently graves. These are located at a spot perhaps two hundred yards West of where the trail crossed the outlet from Blue Lake and lying Southeast of the sunk hole formerly known as Pickerel Pond. When the trail was being built it was necessary to cut off one corner of one of these grave mounds. And an old musket was unearthered. It was thought at first that this was an Indian cemetery, but the general formation and lay of the mounds makes this doubtful.

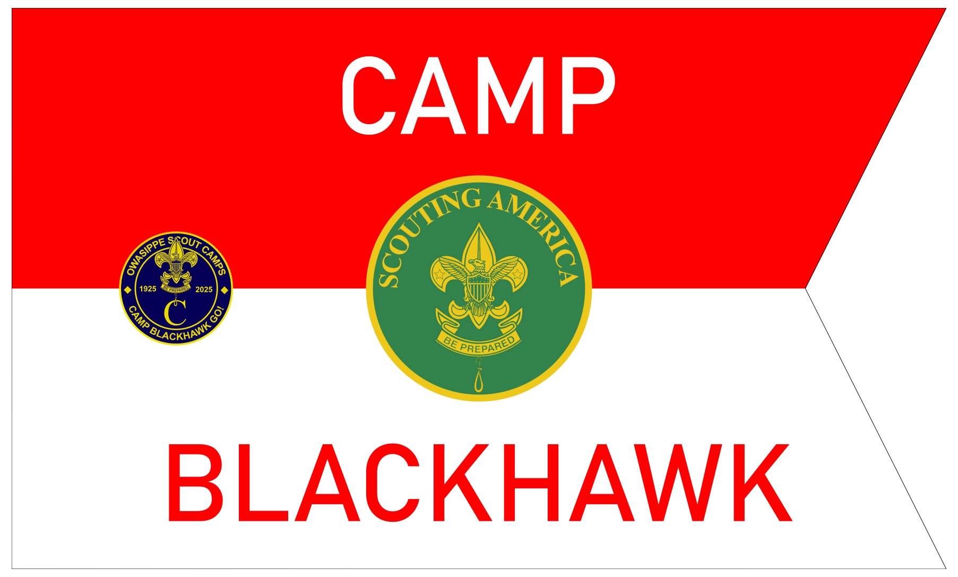
It may be that back in the very early days before this region was settled at all, some exploring bands of pioneers had a battle with the Indians on this spot and lost several of their number and buried them in the woods.

The Writing of the Owasippe Hymn

In 1927, E. Urner Goodman—founder of the Order of the Arrow—became the Council Executive of the Chicago Council. According to former Owasippe Museum curator Sheridan Nunn, Goodman wrote the Owasippe Hymn at Camp Blackhawk's fire bowl during a Memorial Day weekend outing in 1929 (this is disputed and may have been at the Checaugau fire bowl). Today, nearly a century later, the Blackhawk staff continue the tradition of singing the Owasippe Hymn at the very spot it was written, following each fire bowl—one of our camp's oldest traditions.



2015 Blackhawk Flag



2025 Blackhawk Guidon

Camp Blackhawk Song (1950's)

It's a great gang that goes to Blackhawk - Go!
It's a great gang to know.
Always full of pep and ginger,
And the watchword is let's go - let's go!
Always on the level,
Always on the square
It's a great, great gang that goes to Blackhawk - Go!
And my heart's right there.
(Repeat with clapping)

Blackhawk Song

Tune: "The orange and Black" of Princeton

Every Scout Should go a camping
In a place that's nature's own,
And every West Side Scouter knows,
That Blackhawk's natures home'
Midst the flowers and birds of summer,
By the waters of Big Blue,
Let every Scout just stand and shout,
"My Blackhawk I'm for you"

Blackhawk Fight Song (1940's)

Oh, We're the men of Camp Blackhawk
We Scout with all our Might.
We're rough and tough and hard to bluff
And for his name we'll fight.
So take us on and then you'll see
How much of this is time
We're the Scouts of Camp Blackhawk
"Who the heck are you?!"

Blackhawk Lodge & Chapter

'Order of the Arrow'

When the Order of the Arrow (then called WWW or Wimachtendienk) came to Owasippe by the introduction of Col. Carroll Edson. The council executive of the time, George B. Stephensen, was among the early opposition to the name WWW, as it was too close to a Communist Labor organization called the IWW. This prompted the first use of the name Order of the Arrow, a name which originated in Chicago Scouting.

Blackhawk Lodge No. 23

When Colonel Edson formed Moqua Lodge in 1921 at Camp West, he also initiated the camp directors from Camps Beard and McDonald (later renamed Stuart). This resulted in three separate lodges: Moqua Lodge, Wakay Lodge, and Garrison Lodge—each tied to a specific camp, in accordance with the Order of the Arrow guidelines at the time, which stated that each lodge should be connected to a council-operated camp. (Lodge numbers were assigned retroactively, with Moqua becoming Lodge No. 7, Wakay No. 13, and Garrison No. 21.) In 1926, with the emergence of Camp Blackhawk, Blackhawk Lodge No. 23 was established. However, this lodge existed for only three years before E. Urner Goodman, then Council Executive, consolidated all sub-camp lodges into one unified lodge in 1929—Owasippe Lodge No. 7. Following the merger, the original lodge names were preserved as chapter names, with Blackhawk Chapter serving the West Side District.

Above: Blackhawk Lodge Vigil Totem pin

Right: Owasippe Lodge Totem pin

BLACKHAWK CHAPTER
WWW

Left: Blackhawk Chapter Patch

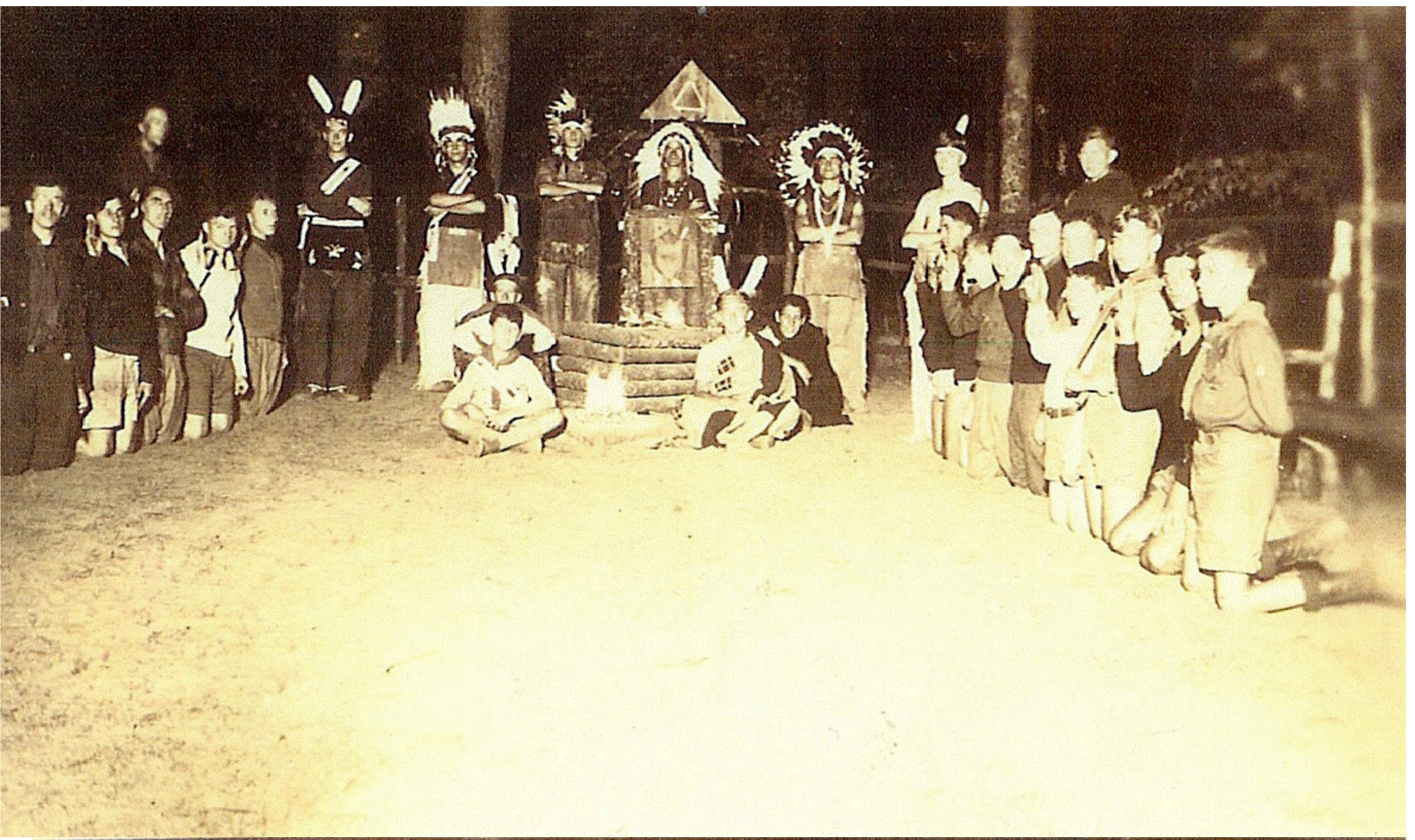
Right: Wakay Lodge Ceremony 1920's

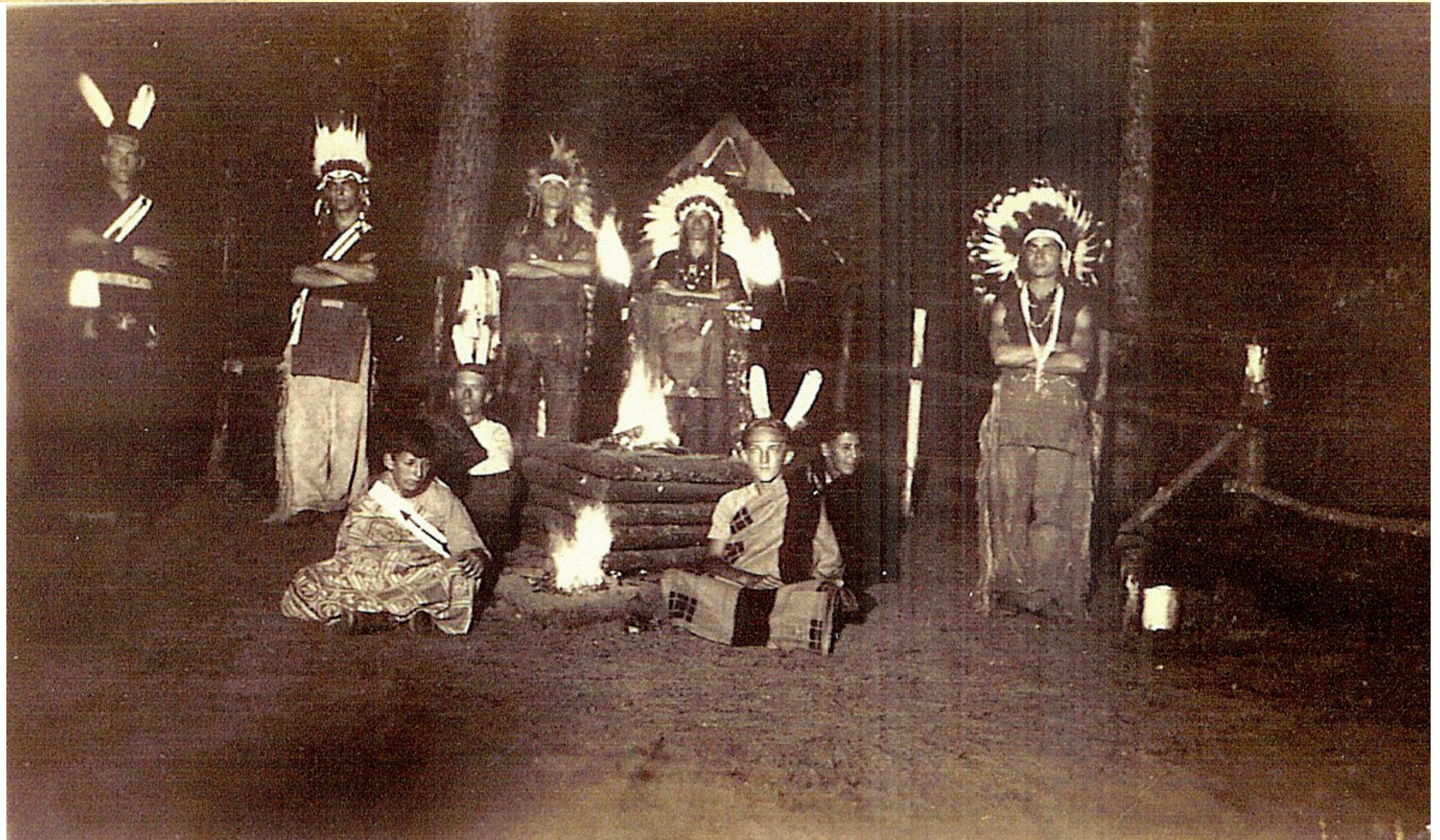
Bottom: Moqua Lodge 1920's (Col. Edson is present)

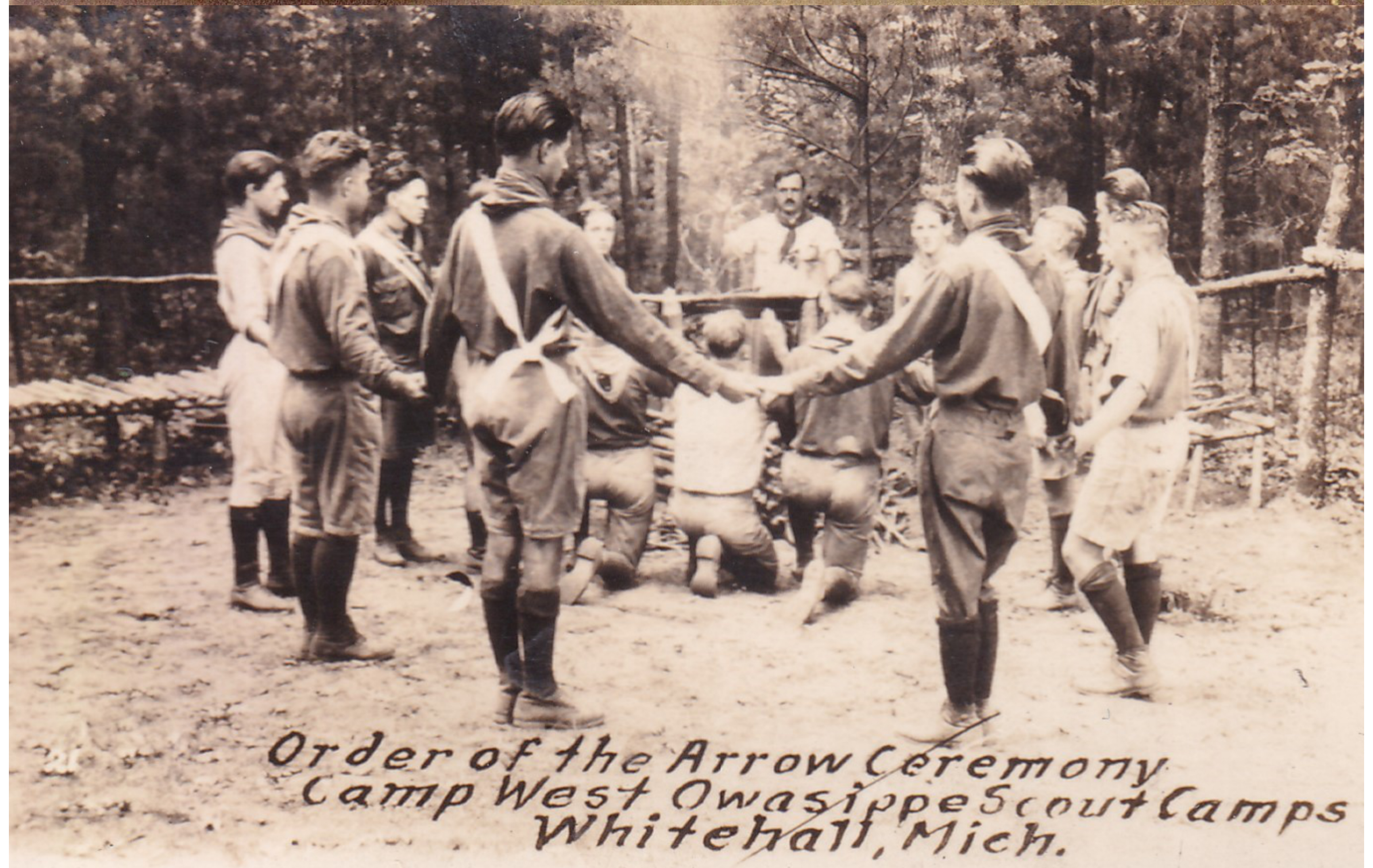
Camp Directors

(Help us fill in the blanks email to owasippearchive@gmail.com)

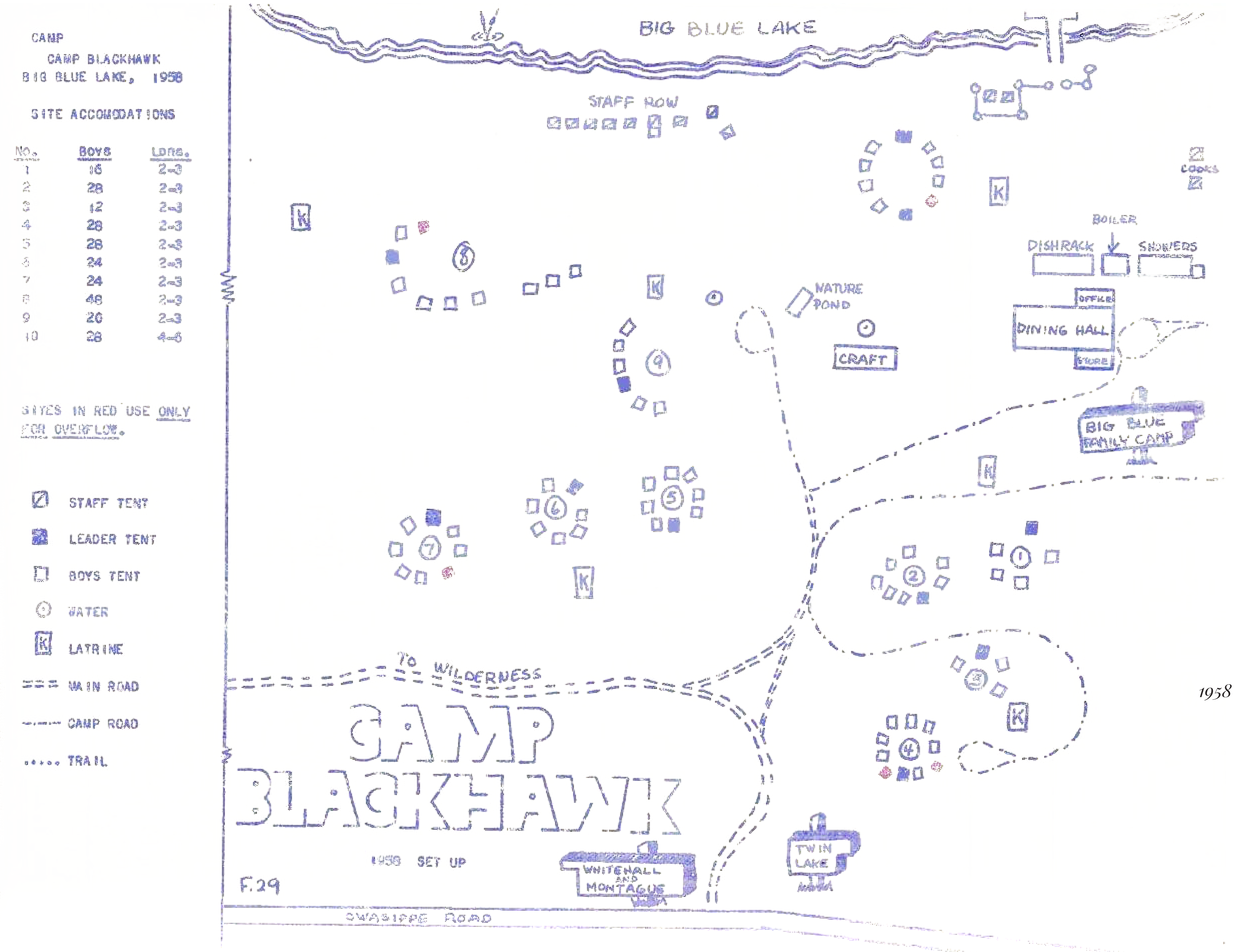
1925-28 Al Carpenter
1929-32 James Hiner
1937-40 John Lovett
1941 Robert H. Krejci
1949 James M. Harvey
1950
1951
1952
1953
1954
1955
1956
1957
1958
1959
1960 Thomas Hillyard
1961 Wilbur Johnson
1962
1963
1964
1965 Anthony Dopke
1966
1967 Ron Temple
1968
1969
1970 Robert Fox
1971-72 LeRoy Banicki
1973-74 Pat Monahan
1975 Thomas Crissey
1976 Jack Coussens
1977
1978 James Radloff
1979-80 George Sparks
1981 Rick Lowry
1982 Jim Gallagher
1983 Dave Schlichting
1984
1985
1986
1987
1988 Jay Bolduc
1989 Mark Kranenberg
1990 Pete Klaeser
1991-92 Patrick Troy
1993 Thomas Mclean
1994 Jay Bolduc
1995 Sean Monahan
1996-98 Pat Monahan
1999-2000 Lynn Swoop Delamano
2001 Ray Toler
2002 Carl Young
2003-07 Marilyn Kulak
2008 Michael Brus
2009-11 Sean Haneberg
2012-13 Alex Lohse
2014 Andrew Hizel
2015 Andrew Piper
2016 Kyle Nystrom
2017 Daniel Piper
2018-19 Nick Chavarria
2021-23 Dalton Devries
2024-25 Kyle Peters






Order of the Arrow Ceremony
Camp West Owasippe Scout Camps
Whitehall, Mich.

1950's Camp Layout



CAMP
CAMP BLACKHAWK
BIG BLUE LAKE, 1958

SITE ACCOMODATIONS

No.	BOYS	LDRS.
1	16	2-3
2	28	2-3
3	12	2-3
4	28	2-3
5	28	2-3
6	24	2-3
7	24	2-3
8	48	2-3
9	20	2-3
10	28	4-6

SITES IN RED USE ONLY FOR OVERFLOW.

▨	STAFF TENT
■	LEADER TENT
☐	BOYS TENT
⊙	WATER
K	LATRINE
===	MAIN ROAD
-·-·-	CAMP ROAD
·····	TRAIL

BIG BLUE LAKE
STAFF ROW
COOKS
BOILER
DISHRACK
SHOWERS
NATURE POND
CRAFT
OFFICE
DINING HALL
STORE
BIG BLUE FAMILY CAMP
8
9
7
6
5
1
2
3
4
K
TO WILDERNESS
CAMP BLACKHAWK
1958 SET UP
F.29
WHITEHALL AND MONTAGUE
TWIN LAKE
OWASIPPE ROAD

1958 Map